



FELKOVIC'S CAT

BY PAUL CULOTTA

Are seven lives enough to wreak its vengeance?

Artwork by Bob Klasnich

The forest is not quiet tonight. Harsh panting rasps from the old man's chest as he staggers through the dense underbrush. Behind him comes the scream of a large predatory cat. His pursuer might be hundreds of yards away, but to the man it seems like only a few feet and he quickens his pace. How can he hope to outrun this demonic pursuit? The cat yowls again, closer this time.

The man runs headlong into a tree in the darkness. Thinking as quickly as his overstrained mind can manage, he scrambles up through the branches, but it is too late. A black flash of fur and claws leaps incredibly high and pulls the man off his leafy perch. With a scream of terror and a sickening crunch, the man hits the ground.

Miraculously, he rolls over and tries to get to his feet, but his left leg dangles loosely and will not support him. Frantically, he looks about him, trying to pierce the darkness with his merely human vision. Where is the beast that has been chasing him? In its place at the base of the tree stands Baron von Kharkov, whose bright yellow eyes twinkle with amusement in stark contrast to his swarthy skin. His smile is inviting and warm, a full toothy grin. The baron gives a throaty chuckle as he shakes his head and removes his gloves, revealing pawlike hands with hard, sharp claws.

"Did you fall from the tree, Yosef? Ah, your leg, it is hurt. Here, let me see if I can ease your pain," the baron purrs.

The forest is not quiet. A howling—not of panthers but of a man—echoes through the forest, punctuated by sobbing pleas for mercy and the baron's hearty laugh. After an hour, this pitiless duet mercifully ends, but there is no one to see the inky form of a great black panther with a bloody muzzle silently padding back to Castle Pantara. This is the wilderness of Valachan, and for now the forest is quiet.

"Felkovic's Cat" is an AD&D® game RAVENLOFT® adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 6-9 (about 36 total levels). All PCs should be good or neutrally aligned, and one should be a priest. The adventurers need magical weapons to defeat the powerful undead and other monsters they will encounter.

Prior to running the adventure, the DM should review published information on Valachan, von Kharkov, and the cat of Felkovic in the RAVENLOFT setting boxed set; the material on Baron Urik

von Kharkov in *RR1 Darklords*, pages 54-59; and the information on nosferatu vampires in the new *Monstrous Compendium®: RAVENLOFT Appendix III (MC15 Creatures of Darkness)*. Additionally, the DM should review the information on "anchoring" a ghost in *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts (VRGG)*, pages 22-24. *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* may also prove helpful. If these sources are unavailable, enough information is presented here to run the adventure.

During this quest, the PCs enter the domain of Valachan in the Ravenloft demiplane and encounter Baron Urik von Kharkov, a ferocious and cruel nosferatu vampire. Like most lords of core domains, von Kharkov has several unusual powers and is nearly invincible. In Valachan, however, there is a special item that can destroy this awesome undead lord.

Only by defeating the baron can the PCs escape the Demiplane of Dread. If the PCs fall prey to the baron and his vassals, their fate will be so horrid as to defy description. The PCs' richest reward in this adventure will be escaping with lives and spirits intact.

For the Dungeon Master

Valachan is a domain of rough canyons, gullies, and heavy forests. Many dark-furred animals live within the gloomy shade of the trees: rabbits, moose, martens, boars, deer, bears—and predatory black panthers. Occasional farms or woodsman's huts dot the wilderness, but most of the people live in one of Valachan's three towns: Ungrad (population 1,500), Rotwald (population 4,000), and Habelnik (population 3,500). The people of Valachan, all humans, generally accept their lot in life, which is not unduly harsh. Those who do not accept their fate usually disappear or meet a violent and often slow death.

The ruler of the land is Baron Urik von Kharkov, a tall, dark-skinned nosferatu vampire whom some consider quite handsome. This manly beauty hides his unusual past: He was born as an ordinary black panther. In his youth, he was *polymorphed* into human form by a powerful red wizard of Thay. The evil wizard Morphyus sent Urik to the best schools in Cormyr, then encouraged his transformed pet to woo a woman who had spurned Morphyus' advances. While Urik and the woman were in a passionate embrace, the wizard cast a

dispel magic spell. Urik reverted to panther form and tore his love to pieces.

After the wizard *polymorphed* the panther back to human form, Urik was horrified at his deed and fled into the mists of Ravenloft. He emerged in Darkon, where he learned about vampirism. Urik longed for immortality—endless years to wreak havoc on a world that had treated him badly. In Darkon he got his wish, and gained a reputation for inflicting extreme pain and suffering on his victims. When his vampire master was destroyed, Urik fled again into the mists, emerging in a new domain created just for him by the dark powers of the demiplane.

Since that time, Baron von Kharkov has laired in Castle Pantara, which resembles the body of a large cat. He keeps a few younger nosferatu vampires and one vampire elf as slaves, to guard the castle and keep watch on his yearly bride. From time to time, reluctant villagers are called to service in the castle, doing routine cleaning and maintenance, pickling and preserving vegetables, and providing nightly snacks for von Kharkov and his vampire slaves.

Most natural animals shy away from undead, but the panthers of Valachan freely associate with the undead of Castle Pantara. Indeed, Baron von Kharkov's origin as a panther has given him unusual abilities with all kinds of cats. He can enter a trance and experience (but not control) everything that a specific cat experiences. He also can summon 2-5 normal black panthers to serve him. Finally, instead of assuming the form of a wolf or bat like other vampires, von Kharkov can shapechange only into a large, powerful panther that can leap up to 30'.

There is one cat in Valachan, however, that the baron has no control over.

The Tale of Felkovic and His Cat

Among Valachan's citizens were the wizard Felkovic and his beautiful wife, Nadia. Despite an age difference of 12 years, Nadia kept her older husband feeling young through her wit, charm, and grace, and Felkovic often thanked his deity for such good fortune. Even under the baron's stern rule, the wizard and his wife lived happily—until the baron decided that he wanted Nadia for himself.

It was quite by accident that Felkovic discovered the baron's plan. He was having a cup of tea at the Crispy Pickle

Tavern in his home town of Habelnik, when he overheard two of the baron's guards plotting against him. Felkovic was to be taken away quietly one night. Later, the guards would take torn and bloody pieces of his clothing to Nadia, saying that they feared the wizard had been killed and eaten by panthers from the forest. A month later, Baron von Kharkov would select her as his bride, getting the woman he wanted while creating the impression that he was a charitable lord who was taking in and providing for a widow.

Felkovic quietly slipped out of the inn and went home. He already had suspicions about the baron, because so many people who served in the castle came back with horrible nightmares and a sickness called white fever. Ten years before, a revolt in Rotwald had ended in brutal suppression; the surviving rebels had suffered grisly executions. As long as he had not been bothered, Felkovic had ignored the baron's affairs. Those who showed too much curiosity had a way of disappearing. The overheard threat to his family was another matter, but saving his wife from the baron seemed hopeless. No one had ever escaped Valachan, and the baron and his henchmen—known as the Black Leopards—were so powerful that Felkovic's spells seemed insignificant.

Desperately, Felkovic researched long and hard into arcane works that he had never before dared to open. After several days of study, he opened his coffers and used every coin and jewel he had to buy the materials he needed to create a powerful magical item that could defeat the baron. When all was assembled, he sent Nadia to her mother's home in Rotwald, and he locked himself in his tower. For the next few days, all of Felkovic's neighbors stayed clear as lights, explosions, and strange noises (sounding like the yowling of cats) burst from the tower windows. At the end of the week, dark clouds boiled through the night sky, lightning bolts struck metal rods affixed to the tower roof, and more bright flashes illuminated the window frames. Then all was quiet.

Inside, in the wreckage of his workshop, Felkovic proudly held a small jade figurine shaped like a cat. Despite its innocent appearance, the 1'-tall statuette had tremendous destructive potential. When thrown to the ground and a command word ("Longteeth") uttered, the cat would animate into an enchanted saber-toothed tiger.

The wizard felt so confident of his creation that he decided to go to Castle Pantara then and there to unleash the *cat* and eliminate the baron. Slipping the figurine into his pocket of his robe, he turned to grab his hat—and found himself staring into two glowing yellow feline eyes that were deep pools inviting friendship and camaraderie. It was his good friend Baron von Kharkov, come to investigate all the fuss and noise.

The baron invited the hopelessly *charmed* wizard to Castle Pantara for a spot of tea and game of chess, and Felkovic was honored by the invitation. During the ride in the baron's carriage, they had a wonderful talk about the weather, Nadia's health and whereabouts, prospects for the crops, and all the recent noisy commotion in Habelnik. Felkovic smoothed over this last subject with a half truth ("a new process, my lord, for making small statuettes") because he was so ashamed that he had thought ill of his good friend.

Von Kharkov thought no more of it and kept up the chatter until they got to the courtyard of Castle Pantara. As the two men got down from the coach, the baron gave a sharp whistle. Four panthers emerged from the shadows and quickly knocked Felkovic down. Between them and the baron (who had assumed his panther form), there was soon nothing left of the wizard. Felkovic never had a chance to pull the *cat* statuette from his pocket; it fell to the ground and was knocked aside in the panther's first rush.

As he died, Felkovic was outraged at how he had been fooled. All of his hard work had been wasted, and his beloved Nadia would now fall into the hands of this evil lord. With his final breath, the wizard hissed, "Damn you, von Kharkov! May you die by claw and tooth!" His emotion was so strong that Felkovic's spirit lingered after his death, becoming a vengeful ghost anchored to the wizard's most precious possession and the one item capable of carrying out the curse: the jade cat figurine.

Felkovic discovered, however, that his ghostly power was quite limited. Because of the figurine's powerful magic, he could do nothing directly. In fact the ghost and figurine remained dormant until someone claimed ownership of it.

For weeks, the tiny jade cat lay in the courtyard; then two curious panther cubs found it. First they pawed at it, then they chased it across the cobble-

stones, swiping at it and yowling the whole time. The statuette made a great toy as it clattered and skipped along with the cubs in hot pursuit. Eventually, the statue suffered the fate of most cat toys. One of the cubs smacked it out of reach, right under a door. It was, in fact, the door to a tower, and inside was a stairway leading down to the castle's dungeons. The small statue slid across the floor, landed on the stairs, and tumbled all the way down to the bottom.

There it lay for several more months until one night the baron was wandering through his dungeon and found it. Being a cat lover, he took a fancy to the little statuette and put it on a shelf in his study, unaware that by doing so he had claimed ownership of the *cat* and had activated the angry spirit within.

The figurine animated and grew into a different (and larger) cat form each night for the next seven nights. Felkovic's spirit found that it could influence the timing of the *cat's* animation so that it occurred when no one was around. Each night when the statue was transformed into living form, the *cat* was quite hungry. For six nights it hunted around the castle, killing rats at first, then stalking the woods for bigger prey. On the seventh night, the *cat* turned into its largest form, that of a saber-toothed tiger (smilodon), and went hunting for some real big game: von Kharkov himself.

The baron was puzzled at how this big cat had gotten into his castle, but he arrogantly let it attack, thinking that it could do him no harm. Von Kharkov was shocked to discover that the claws and teeth of this beast burned him like holy water. Worse yet, he found he could not turn into gaseous form and escape. Frantically, as the huge cat clawed and bit, von Kharkov screamed for his servants and they came running. Some of them had magical weapons that hurt the smilodon badly, and it reluctantly fled the castle. When it was several miles away, it reverted to figurine form and again became dormant.

It took the baron many nights to recover, as his wounds healed only after he drained blood from new victims. Several of the villagers working in his castle went home with bad cases of white fever, and some did not return home at all. When he had recovered, the baron posted a bounty of 500 pantherheads (a Valachan coin worth 2 gp) for the head of the cat. Although that was a hefty sum, none of the inhabitants of

Valachan felt inclined to go hunting in the dark, panther-infested woods.

Eventually the *cat* was found by some unlikely new owners—a gang of orcs that had wandered into the mists of Ravenloft. As they were making their way through the thick forests, the orcs passed close to the jade statuette, and Felkovic's spirit pushed out with its mind to lure a new owner. Bundakai, the orc leader, felt the need to wander behind some nearby bushes and almost stepped on the figurine before he saw it. Thinking that the odd little cat might be worth a few gold pieces, he put it in his pouch. That night the statuette magically turned into a small cat, and on the following nights it got bigger and bigger. It even brought part of its kill to the orcs.

This went on each night until the seventh night, when the orcs were confronted by a huge saber-toothed tiger that wanted Bundakai for dinner. Within minutes, every member of the orc gang had been killed, and the smilodon was feasting on the orc leader. When the *cat* had eaten its fill, it reverted to statuette form and became dormant again (much to the relief of Felkovic's ghost, who had tired of the orcs' constant bickering and loathsome habits).

Thus, deep in the forests of Valachan, the *cat of Felkovic* waits for a new owner to fulfill its maker's curse against Baron von Kharkov.

Arriving in Ravenloft

If the PCs begin the adventure outside the Demiplane of Dread, the DM should incorporate a smooth transition that instills an air of mystery without giving away that the PCs are not where they used to be. The mists of Ravenloft may be mistaken for early morning ground fog, transporting the adventurers to Valachan before they realize that the road has taken them far from their original destination. Another option is to use a gate to Ravenloft, such as the ones known to exist in the ruins of ancient Myth Drannor in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® game setting. (See *The Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set.)

If the PCs are in Ravenloft at the start of the adventure, they can travel to Valachan from an adjacent land, or they can enter via the mists that border all domains on the demiplane. If this adventure is run as a sequel to "The Price of Revenge" (issue #42), the PCs will already be in Valachan. The two

adventurers have some differences, however, that must be examined to create a seamless campaign.

The vampires in "Price of Revenge" were the baron's slaves, and were looked upon by the townspeople of Ungrad as saviors who had restored good government and found the cure for white fever. Although von Kharkov allowed this experiment in benevolent government in a backwater town, it is not how he runs things elsewhere in Valachan. The baron is cruel and oppressive, and while he maintains a facade of benevolence, he rules with an iron fist (or paw). His henchmen, the Black Leopards, serve as a both espionage service and police force in the other two towns of Valachan. As related in *Darklords*, von Kharkov has ruthlessly suppressed several uprisings, and while it has been over 10 years since the last revolt, the people of Valachan still remember the harsh justice of the baron's minions.

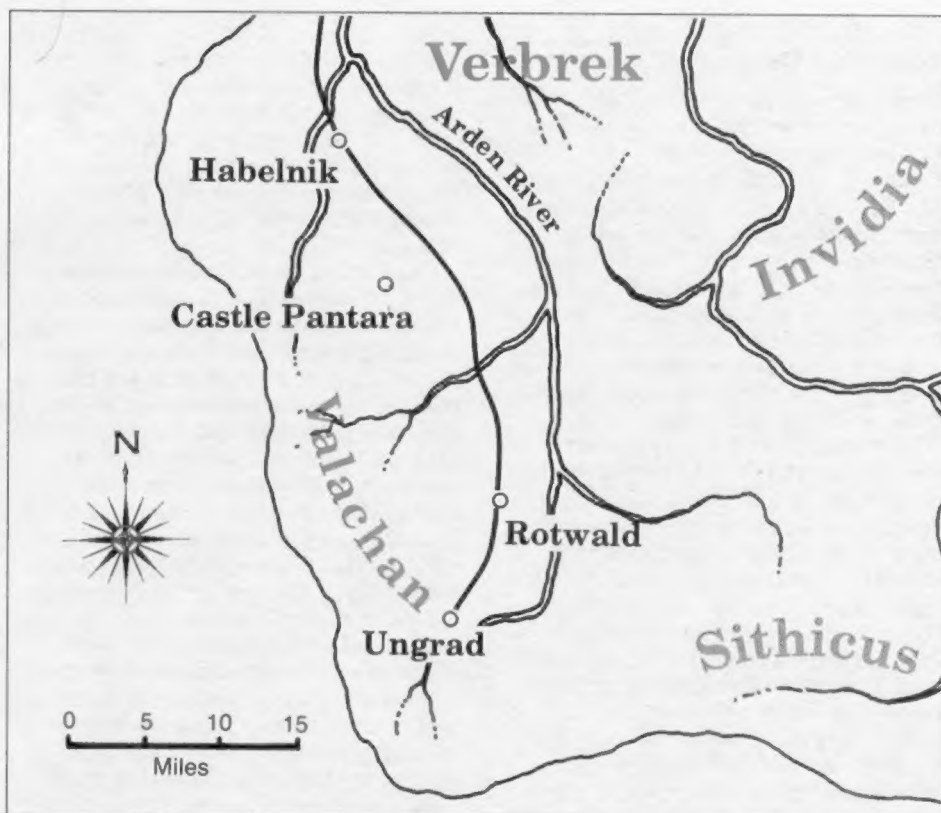
Thus, most Valachanese are not like the friendly folks in Ungrad. Indeed, as night falls, their mood gets more somber, and they go to bed early with the covers pulled over their heads.

One other small point: In south Valachan, there are many wolves about. This is unique to the Ungrad area. In west and central Valachan, black panthers abound, and the wolves stay away.

To begin the adventure, read, paraphrase, or alter the following to fit the DM's choice of transition into Ravenloft:

You are in a thick forest of stately oaks, maples, and other leafy trees. It is cool here, and the leaves are beginning to turn to their autumn shades. Sprawled beneath a tree is a skeleton of some humanoid creature holding a broken, rusty sword. The fog is burning away but seems to linger in the thicker growth of the woods.

The skeleton was once an orc, judging from its cranial structure, teeth, and overall build. Its studded-leather armor was ripped to pieces; only fragments remain. Another orc skeleton lies just a few feet away, and even a hasty search reveals others. Altogether there are eight intact skeletons, plus a number of bones in a loose pile that would make up one additional orc. A quick examination of the bones in this pile reveals that they have been gnawed, cracked, and broken. Next to the bones lies a ripped pouch from which has spilled 8 gp, 10 sp, 12 cp, and a small jade figure.



rine of a happy-looking cat.

Maximize the eeriness of the situation by describing the writing inscribed on the coins as unlike any the adventurers have ever seen. The cat statuette has no special markings but is finely crafted and looks valuable. It is 100% resistant to destructive magic, and the statuette radiates magic. The loose bones are the remains of Bundakai, the cat's last meal.

In the unlikely event that the PCs leave the treasure, Felkovic's spirit sends an empathic suggestion to one of the PCs (preferably a wizard), luring her to pick up the cat and keep it. This ability to communicate telepathically is a modified form of a ghost's extraordinary powers to *charm* and to *lure*. (See *VRGG*, pages 37 and 44-45.) The DM must handle this communication discreetly and should take the player aside to describe the mental "push" her character feels. Resolve the situation through role-playing rather than by rolling saving throws to avoid the lure.

If the PCs proceed without the cat, all is not lost. They may come back to get it later, or they may defeat the baron without the cat's help (a task that is considerably more difficult). The "Nadia's Visit"

encounter (page 58) gives the PCs a hint for defeating von Kharkov.

From this point on, the PCs are on their own to explore Valachan and to determine what is going on. Several things will occur, however. First, Felkovic's spirit suggests that the adventurer who has picked up the cat should travel south. The spirit realizes that he is in northern Valachan but does not know exactly where. By heading south, the party will run into Habelnik, Felkovic's hometown. Once there, he will guide the PCs to Castle Pantara.

It is a one-day walk to Habelnik, about 12 miles over rough ground. The DM should let the players role-play in that town to get information, then run "The Lottery" planned encounter on the evening of the second night.

No matter where the PCs are—in town or in the wilderness—the cat of Felkovic becomes a living cat every night. If the PCs don't answer its hungry yowls with food, it goes off on its own to hunt, bringing its kill back to the PCs' camp. If a fire or stove is available, the cat indicates to the PCs through its growls and actions that it wants its meat cooked.

Felkovic's Cat Forms

Each night, the *cat of Felkovic* assumes a living form as described below, until the PCs prove themselves worthy to Felkovic's spirit. (See the sidebar on page 53.) The DM may need to modify these descriptions to fit the PCs' actions and locations. For example, if the PCs stay overnight in an inhabited area, and the description says that the *cat* kills and brings back a deer, the DM should instead have the *cat* kill a large dog. In every instance, the *cat* reverts to figurine form two hours after feeding.

First Night: As the adventurers make camp, the PC who picked up the *cat of Felkovic* (referred to in this adventure as the cat's owner) feels movement in the pouch or knapsack in which the figurine was placed. Soon a tiger-striped domestic cat pops out of the container, meowing pitifully for food. If the PCs don't feed it, the *cat* runs away and returns a few minutes later with a plump field mouse. It nudges its prize close to the campfire, waits for a while, turn the mouse over with a paw, lets it cook a while longer, and then eats it. Later, the *cat* nestles close to its owner and purrs loudly. A PC with a *speak with animals* spell may wish to talk to the *cat*. This will work, although a *charm mammal* or *animal friendship* spell will not. Until the wizard reveals himself, Felkovic's ghost will speak only as a cat.

Second Night: Felkovic's spirit gives the *cat's* owner a mental push, suggesting the owner remove the figurine from whatever container it has been stored in. Once freed, the figurine becomes a giant lynx that yowls hungrily. If no food is forthcoming, it bounds off into the woods and returns with a rabbit. If Felkovic's spirit sees that the PCs are short on food, the lynx goes hunting again until it has brought back a rabbit or squirrel for each PC.

If the PC ignores the mental push and leaves the figurine confined for two rounds, the *cat's* adopts living form within the PC's clothes or pack, clawing its way out and destroying the container in the process.

Third Night: After the mental warning, the *cat* grows to panther size and bounds off into the night. An hour later, the PCs hear the scream of the

panther in the distance, and soon thereafter the *cat* returns to camp dragging a small deer. When the "Nadia's Visit" encounter is run, the *cat* will have already turned into figurine form after feeding, but will reemerge in panther form to fight the undead. (See page 58.)

Fourth Night: The *cat* transforms into a jaguar tonight. It runs into the woods, returning an hour later proudly dragging a dead boar. Pork was one of Felkovic's favorite dishes; as the PCs cook the boar, the jaguar looks on hungrily and licks its chops. Felkovic likes his pork well done, and the *cat* will insist (through suitable growls and snarls) that the meat not be removed from the fire until properly cooked.

Fifth Night: Tonight the *cat* becomes a large tiger, and it is not as friendly as before. (Felkovic is getting surly because the PCs have not proven themselves after five days.) It takes off with a snarl and returns later with the leg and haunch of some large creature. A ranger, druid, or PC with hunting proficiency may determine that the meat came from a moose. The tiger cooks the meat, much like the cat on the first night, and it is not in a mood to share. PCs who get too close to the *cat* on this night receive a menacing snarl and perhaps even a nip from the tiger's sharp teeth.

Sixth Night: Tonight Felkovic provides no mental warning prior to the *cat's* transformation. Felkovic's spirit is quite impatient with the adventurers. The *cat* transforms into a large spotted lion that takes off without giving the PCs a second glance. When it returns an hour later, its muzzle is bloody and it gives itself a good bath. It does not return to its owner until good and ready to go back to figurine form, and anyone who approaches it is swatted by a heavy paw.

Seventh Night: This is the night of reckoning. If the PCs have not yet been greeted by Felkovic's spirit, the *cat* assumes the form of a smilodon and does its best to destroy them. This is a life and death situation with no quarter given or received. If the smilodon wins, it eats its owner for dinner and reverts to figurine form to await a better qualified group of allies. If the smilodon is defeated, the PCs must fight the angry ghost of Felkovic, who

is no longer anchored to the figurine and is furious that his curse will not be fulfilled.

Felkovic's ghost: INT high; AL N; AC 0, MV 9; HD 10; hp 66; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg age 10-40 years; SA *fear, magic jar*; SD struck by only silver or magical weapons; vulnerable to spells only when caster is ethereal; SZ M; ML 18; XP 7,000; MM/130.

The cat of Felkovic: INT high (due to Felkovic's spirit); AL N; SA attacks harmful to vampires, *cat's* presence within 20' prevents vampires from assuming gaseous form; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR 100% to all destructive or harmful spells; ML 18.

The creature's specific cat forms have the following statistics:

Cat, wild: AC 5; MV 18; HD 1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-2; SA rear claws rake for 1-2 hp each if both front paws hit; SD -3 to opponents' surprise rolls, surprised only on 1 or 2; SZ T (2' long); MM/38.

Giant lynx: AC 6; MV 12; HD 2 + 2; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-2; SA rear claws rake for 1-3 hp each if both front paws hit, leap 15'; SD -6 to opponents' surprise rolls; SZ M (4½' long); MM/36.

Panther: AC 6; MV 15; HD 3 + 2; hp 26; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA rear claws rake for 1-4 hp each if both front paws hit, spring 20' up or 25' forward; SD -3 to opponents' surprise rolls; SZ M (4½' long); MM/36.

Jaguar: AC 6; MV 15; HD 4 + 1; hp 33; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA rear claws rake for 2-5 hp each if both front paws hit, leap 30'; SZ L (5' long); MM/36.

Tiger: AC 6; MV 12; HD 5 + 5; hp 45; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/1-10; SA rear claws rake for 2-8 hp each if both front paws hit, leap 10' up, spring 50' forward; SD surprised only on 1; SZ L (7' long); MM/36.

Spotted lion: AC 5/6; MV 12; HD 6 + 2; hp 50; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-12; SA rear claws rake for 2-8 hp each if both front paws hit, spring upward 15' or ahead 20'; SZ L (6½' long); MM/36.

Smilodon: AC 6; MV 12; HD 7 + 2; hp 58; THAC0 11 (bite), 13 (claws); #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/2-12; SA rear claws rake for 2-8 hp each if both front paws hit; SZ L (9' long); XP 1,400; MM/36.

Felkovic's spirit observes the PCs closely at all times. If they are evil or boorish, Felkovic allows the *cat* go through its natural growth pattern until, on the seventh day, it is large enough to eat its owner and kill the owner's companions (just like the orcs). Misplaying one's alignment in this adventure could have deadly consequences. On the other hand, if the PCs do anything to show that they are committed to act against von Kharkov, Felkovic's spirit reveals himself. At this time, the DM should read the sidebar "Felkovic's Spirit" below and run this event with the PCs.

At least three situations will trigger Felkovic's spirit to reveal himself, and there may be others:

- Taking action against the Black Leopards at the bridal lottery in Habelnik. (See "The Lottery.")

- Destroying Nadia, now a vampire. (See "Nadia's Visit.")

- Deducing that the baron is an evil being of some sort and undertaking an expedition against him.

After the PCs' encounter with Felkovic's spirit, their goal should be clear (and rather frightening): Go to the lair of the domain lord himself and defeat him, along with all of his minions.

While the above is a general outline of what may occur during this adventure, the DM can alter the course of events to suit the (notoriously unpredictable) PCs' decisions. Give the PCs every opportunity to show Felkovic's spirit that they are true heroes. If the PCs prove unworthy, the consequences are no less severe than losing to the baron.

As the PCs wander through the wilderness of Valachan, they may encounter various creatures, depending on the DM's desires. While random encounters will keep the PCs on their toes, such encounters may also detract from the excitement of the story. There is ample room for creativity in devising unique encounters, if the DM decides to use them. The RAVENLOFT setting boxed set provides guidelines for the types and frequencies of creatures in Valachan, but this information is not all inclusive. If the PCs are traveling aimlessly, the DM can include an encounter with two farmers rafting down a river. If the PCs are friendly, the farmers offer the PCs a ride on the raft and can provide enough information to get the adventure moving again.

Habelnik

If the PCs follow the *cat's* mental push and go south, the party should pass

through the town of Habelnik. Its buildings are all one or two story wooden constructions painted in drab colors. The only exception is a high tower on the northern edge of town. The center of town contains a grassy square with a community well. No walls or fortifications protect the town, as it is well secured by the Black Leopards and the townspeople's fear of the baron.

As the PCs enter town, they notice large banners hung across the streets: "Welcome to the Annual Bridal Lottery!". They also see posters tacked on fences, buildings, and trees. Each poster is the same and says:

BE IT KNOWN, that I, Baron Urik von Kharkov, ruler of all Valachan, condemn the accursed giant cat haunting our fair land. This tawny, fanged beast is a killer of man, woman, child, and livestock, and must be killed lest we all perish! I offer 500 pantherheads and a lifetime exemption from the levy to any who can bring me the creature's head.

Urik von Kharkov, Baron of Valachan

Except for the werepanther Black Leopards, the town's inhabitants are all human. The villagers stare with curiosity

Felkovic's Spirit

Whenever the PCs prove their heroic intentions to Felkovic's spirit, read or paraphrase the following to the players: [The PC who owns the *cat*] feels a familiar mental push. This time, however, the figurine does not transform into a cat. Instead, a swirl of mist spirals up from the little jade statue's mouth and slowly takes on a translucent humanoid form. The ghostly apparition speaks: (The DM may have to alter Felkovic's speech to fit the PCs' situation.)

"Well done. You have shown me that you have the potential and desire to destroy the evil that infects this land. I am . . . I was Felkovic, a wizard of Habelnik. Years ago, the evil lord of this domain, Baron Urik von Kharkov, plotted to take my beloved wife, Nadia, as his own, and I used all my powers and wealth to create the magical figurine that you now possess. It was designed to destroy von Kharkov, but alas, just when I had completed it, the baron came upon me and ensorcelled me, distracting me from my purpose. He

took me to Castle Pantara, where he and his pets ripped me to pieces and ate my remains.

"My spirit has remained within my creation, waiting many years for someone worthy to assist me in destroying this abomination. Now you have shown yourselves to be the ones I have longed for.

"I myself have no powers against the baron, but my cat does. Each day, simply throw it to the ground and utter the word "Longteeth," and it will assume the form of the great and ancient smilodon cat. But I caution you: the cat must be fed every day. When you confront von Kharkov, the smilodon will do its best to aid you in destroying the fiend who took my Nadia. I implore you to seek him out in his lair at Castle Pantara and bring peace to my spirit and this cursed land. If you do so, your greatest wish will come true."

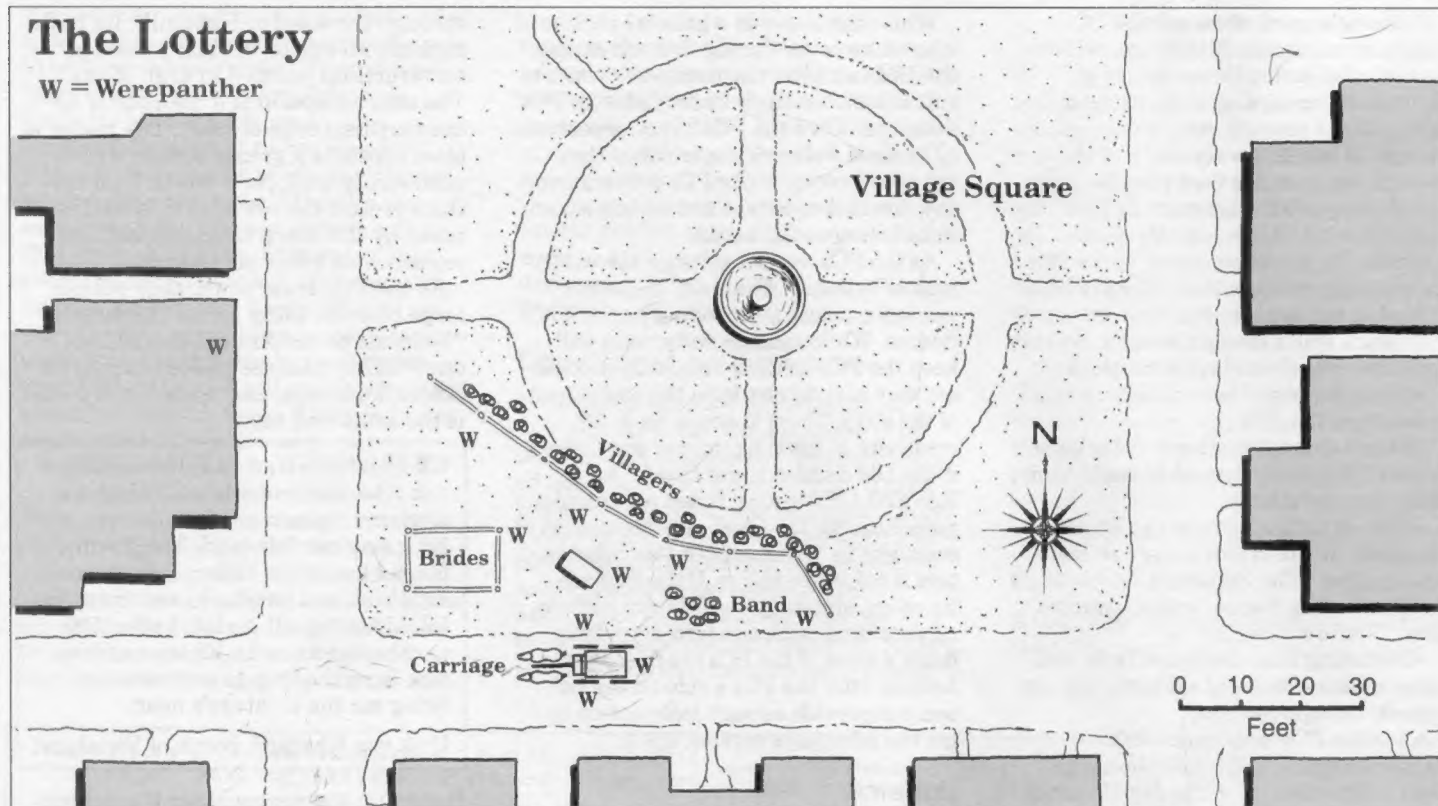
The spirit will remain for a few minutes to answer the PCs' questions. (The DM should refer to "The Tale of

Felkovic and His Cat.") Felkovic does *not* know that von Kharkov is a vampire, but he did see him shapechange into a panther. The wizard also does not remember the complicated procedure he used to make the *cat*. He will not say what will happen to make the PCs' greatest wish come true, because he has no ability to grant a *wish*, but he does not mind letting the PCs believe that he can do this. In response to PCs' questions on this subject, he reiterates, "I assure you that your greatest wish will come true once the evil one is destroyed." In fact, he assumes that their greatest wish is to become lords of a domain. Although this can happen, it will occur in a way that not even Felkovic's spirit suspects. (See "The Conjunction.")

Once the PCs have finished questioning Felkovic's spirit, the mist spirals down and returns to the figurine. The PC who owns the *cat* receives a mental impression of the direction and distance to Castle Pantara.

The Lottery

W = Werepanther



at PCs of other races but don't ask questions. ("Curiosity killed the cat" is a common Valachanese saying.) Even so, the townspeople appear contented, almost happy—until the sun sets, the mists roll in, and panther screams echo from the nearby forest.

The populace consists of zero-level humans whom the baron considers a herd of feed animals for himself and his vampire slaves. If approached in a friendly manner, an inhabitant may provide some useful information. Roll 1d10 or select a tidbit of information appropriate to the question. All information is basically true, as far as the villagers know.

1. This land is called Valachan and is ruled by Baron Urik von Kharkov. The land is bordered by mists, which make travel to other places difficult. A few times a year, traders from other lands appear to buy and sell various goods, but no one from Valachan ever travels very far from his home village.

2. Those who have seen the baron say he is a tall, handsome, dark-skinned man. He's a bit eccentric, though, and always wears gloves.

3. The baron's henchmen are called

the Black Leopards. They are easily recognizable by their banded armor and the weapons they carry. To insult one of the Black Leopards or—heavens forbid—strike one means imprisonment forever in the baron's dungeons.

4. The baron runs a tidy little business in preserved vegetables. These delicacies are famous throughout the surrounding lands and are trade items particularly coveted by the Vistani gypsies. Every week during the growing season, the baron sends a buyer to town to purchase fresh vegetables.

5. The baron does not tax his people harshly, but he requires each town to provide workers for his castle. This is known as the "levy" and it is rotated among the three towns each month. Many of the workers who go on the levy come home quite pale, with a lingering illness known as white fever. Some workers do not return at all; they die from the fever in the castle. The high incidence of white fever must be due to pockets of bad air. (The obvious truth is that white fever is anemia resulting from vampiric draining.) A few workers catch a rare strain of white fever that causes not only paleness but also by ugly scars (one of the baron's

vampire slaves is an elf vampire who drains Charisma).

6. In the past, several uprisings against the baron (based on rumors that he was some kind of monster) were ruthlessly suppressed by the baron and his henchmen. The last such uprising occurred over 10 years ago, and the surviving rebels were taken away by the Black Leopards and never seen again.

7. The baron has a difficult time keeping a wife because white fever usually kills each new bride within the year. Thus, each year, the baron selects a new wife. Due to the risk, this selection is often done by lottery, which is rotated among the towns. This year it is Habelnik's turn to conduct the lottery. Everyone hopes that the baron's new wife resist the fever so that the lotteries will end. Only inhabitants of the town may compete in the lottery.

8. Baron von Kharkov has offered a bounty of 500 pantherheads (each worth 2 gp) for the head of a large cat with huge fangs. This cat is described on many posters throughout town. The woods are full of black panthers, bears, and other beasts, so none of the townspeople have mustered the courage to go

look for the big-toothed cat.

9. A quarter of the population lives outside the cities, working as farmers and woodcutters. Life is harder for them, and many have been lost to white fever. These rustics are, however, exempt from the levy and the bridal lottery.

10. The baron lives in Castle Pantara, on a tall hill about 10 miles south, just off the main road to Rotwald. Those people who have returned from duty in the castle report that a large contingent of Black Leopards and other trusted servants live in and around the castle.

Most of the shops in towns sell products and services suited to an agricultural economy (great deals on plows, animal harnesses, and wagons). Adventuring equipment is in short supply, and weapons are not to be found, although pitchforks, axes, hoes, and other tools can be purchased for use as weapons. No magical items are available anywhere except in Felkovic's tower, and only limited clerical magic is available in the town's church.

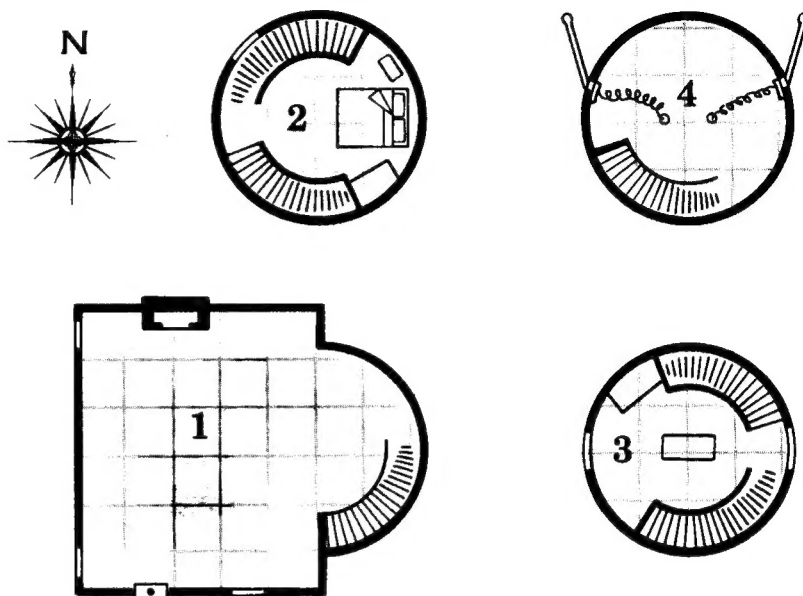
If the PCs offer money from their world, the townspeople look at the coins strangely. The only coins that the Valachanese recognize are the gold pantherhead (about the size of a 50-cent piece, worth 2 gp), the electrum cateye (same size, worth 1 gp), and the copper claw (about the size of a quarter, worth 5 cp). There are no silver coins in the domain.

Habelnik has one small church, dedicated to a deity known as Yutow the Peacebringer, a god unique to Valachan. (The DM may substitute another good-aligned deity if desired.) The 3rd-level priest keeps a ready supply of *cure light wounds* spells for those in need. Strangers must pay two pantherheads per casting. Yutow's theology is based on obeying the law and the master of the land, keeping the peace, and bringing in a plentiful harvest. Baron von Kharkov finds this theology useful in controlling the populace, so he does not disturb the church. Several years ago, the then-current priest received the blessing of Yutow and learned the casting of several new spells. Unfortunately, he met with a horrible accident and his acolyte was installed in his place.

The DM should allow the PCs to roam Habelnik freely and meet the inhabitants. The innkeeper of The Crispy Pickle is anxious for customers and will gladly take the PCs in for one cateye per person per night. As they walk about the town, the PCs spot a Black

Felkovic's Tower

1 square = 5'



Leopard henchman patrolling the streets. Everyone gives the Leopard a wide berth and a fearful glance. Seven of these thugs are stationed in town. (Their statistics are listed in "The Lottery" encounter.)

There are no random encounters in Habelnik. Occasionally, Felkovic's wife Nadia (now a vampire detailed in "Nadia's Visit") wanders into town for a snack, but this happens infrequently (5% chance per night).

Felkovic's Tower

Blackened window frames near the top of this 50'-high stone building are the only evidence of the destruction that occurred here. Any resident of Habelnik can tell the PCs that, years ago, the tower was the home of an easygoing wizard named Felkovic who was married to a beautiful young woman named Nadia. When his wife left him and went home to her mother in Rotwald, the wizard went crazy with grief. One stormy night he cast a thunderous spell that blew out all his windows and sent the neighbors fleeing for their lives. The baron himself came to investigate the disturbance and found the wizard so

befuddled that he took him to Castle Pantara to rest and recover his sanity. Unfortunately, Felkovic caught white fever and died, and Nadia was never heard from again. It is said that she died too, grieving that she caused her husband's mental breakdown. The villagers insist that she roams Valachan as a ghost, looking for her husband.

This tale is quite different from what actually happened, a twisting of the truth through speculation and gossip planted by the Black Leopards. Nadia's occasional visits to Habelnik (she is the baron's nosferatu slave) lend credence to the tale that she is a ghost.

1. Main Floor. The only door to the tower is locked with a huge padlock and posted with a large sign that reads:

BE IT KNOWN that I, Baron Urik von Kharkov, ruler of all Valachan, declare this place to be cursed and forbidden to all inhabitants and visitors to Valachan. Those who trespass upon this property will serve a penalty of two years' labor in Castle Pantara.

Urik von Kharkov, Baron of Valachan

The padlock can be picked normally. Entering through the windows or climbing the tower walls avoids this trouble, but PCs who break windows or scale the walls have a 20% chance of attracting 2-4 Black Leopards. (See pages 57 and 70 for their statistics.)

Inside, dust and mildew coat the once-fine furniture and marble floor. The cooking area near the fireplace holds only hardened and rotted foodstuffs, unwashed crockery, and grime-encrusted pans. (Felkovic reverted to his bachelor habits after Nadia left for Rotwald.) Stairs wind up to the next level.

2. Bedroom. A large bed covered with fine furs dominates the room. On the night table, a wooden stand supports a milky glass globe, and the wardrobe is filled with robes and dresses. The globe and stand are enchanted; a touch on the base causes the globe to glow with *continual light*. Touching the base again turns the light off. Under the bed, a loose floorboard conceals the hiding place of Felkovic's spellbook. This book contains eight first-level spells, seven second-level spells (including *continual light*), five third-level spells, three fourth-level spells, two fifth-level spells, and the sixth-level spell *enchant an item*. The stairs continue up past scorched brick walls and blown-out windows.

3. Laboratory. Broken vials, bottles, jars, and tubing are scattered all over a large work table and spill off onto the floor. Metallic wires and clips hang from holes in the ceiling. A badly warped iron stand holds a book whose pages have been burned to a crisp. Bits and pieces of text can still be read, but the mystic symbols and runes are indecipherable. A *read magic* spell reveals only fragments of the original spells ("Next take the eye of a tiger . . .").

If the PCs open the closet door, the body of a tiger-striped cat falls out onto the laboratory floor. The cat appears to be quite dead, but closer examination reveals that the creature is warm to the touch and has a faint heartbeat. This is Boo, Felkovic's beloved pet, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the domestic cat form of the *cat of Felkovic*. If the figurine has assumed its living form and sees Boo's body, the *cat of Felkovic* yowls at the PCs as if it wants them to do something.

On the night that Felkovic created his artifact, he cast a *temporal stasis* spell

from a scroll on Boo, then put her in the closet to protect her from the dangers associated with the cat figurine. If the PCs cast a *dispel magic* spell on the cat (against 18th-level magic), Boo will awaken. She tries to follow the *cat of Felkovic* whenever it animates, but the cat will never attack Boo no matter how large it becomes.

A PC who needs a familiar or a pet will find a loyal companion in Boo. However, von Kharkov can look through the eyes of any natural cat, and there is a 5% chance per hour (not cumulative) that he will look through Boo's eyes and see the PCs. Once the PCs take any action against the baron, this chance increases to 20% per hour. If the baron sees the PCs in this way, he continues his observation until directly threatened. Boo is unaware of the baron's power and cannot warn its master or the figurine of the spying.

4. Tower Top. PCs standing on the roof of the tower have a fine view of Habelnik and the surrounding area. Distant mountains to the north rise majestically from a base of clouds. Two holes have been bored into the floor of the tower. Wires coming up through the holes connect to two lightning rods bolted onto the tower walls. This equipment seems to have played some key role in Felkovic's experiments.

The Lottery

At 10:00 P.M. on the first night that the PCs are in Habelnik, the adventurers hear music and the murmuring of many voices. A parade winds through the streets of the town, led by two Black Leopards. A small band of gaily clad townspeople follows. Their horns, fiddles, and drums play a merry tune, but somehow the music just isn't right; there is just no fire or enthusiasm. Behind the musicians walk two dozen young women dressed in white gowns and wearing flowers in their hair. They don't seem overjoyed at being in this parade. In fact, they look rather tense and pale with their tightly pursed lips. The end of the procession is marked by two more Black Leopards, looking more like guards than celebrants.

Inquisitive PCs can follow the parade all the way through town, stopping wherever an unwed woman between the ages of 18 and 30 dwells. Eventually everyone ends up in the village square,

where a lottery is held to select a bride for the baron. Although selection is a great honor, it is also a great risk since most brides do not live longer than a year. They always seem to die from white fever or a horrible accident. The villagers hope that one day the baron will find the right woman and break his streak of bad luck.

If the PCs observe the ceremony in the square, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

All of the villagers seem to be gathered in the town square, where a black carriage is parked. Two of the baron's Black Leopard henchmen sit in the coachman's box, while another seven patrol the area. The young ladies are all collected in an area close to the coach. After the musicians finish their last song, one of the Black Leopards walks forward to a wooden stand that hold a black top hat turned upside down. He signals the crowd for quiet, then he announces:

"Good people of Habelnik. This year your town is honored to provide a true and faithful baroness to the ruler of all Valachan. This woman will have the good fortune to share her life with our beloved liege lord, Urik von Kharkov. All hail his name!"

The crowd roars back, "Hail von Kharkov, ruler of all Valachan!"

The guard continues: "Know you that the names of all unmarried women have been placed into this hat of our good lord. And the fortunate lady, your next Baroness of Valachan, is"—a hush falls over the crowd as he pulls a slip of paper from the hat and reads it—"Maria Casalsal!"

The maidens all scream and one of them faints, but she is quickly brought to her feet and escorted to the carriage as the band strikes up a stately march. The Black Leopard who pulled the lucky name leads the crowd in three cheers of "Hail Maria, Baroness of Valachan!" although the villagers' hearts don't seem quite in it. You notice that as Maria seems to be weeping as she steps into the carriage, but it is not clear whether she is weeping tears of joy or of sorrow.

Just as the last cheer fades, an old woman hobbles forward and begs the closest Black Leopard to release Maria. She is answered by an open-handed blow that knocks her to the

ground. She struggles to her knees, grasps the guard's leg, and says something too faint to be heard. In reply, he draws a dagger and cracks her in the head with the pommel. As she slumps to the ground, he growls to the gasping crowd, "Be gone now! The lottery is over." With one final kick to the still body of the old woman, he mounts his horse and stares out over the crowd. The townspeople disperse quickly and quietly as the Black Leopards keep careful watch with their hands close to their weapons.

If the PCs try to intervene, three of the werepanther Black Leopards try to escape with the bride on the coach (two in the coachman's box and one hanging on the back). Six others fight to prevent the PCs from interfering. The tenth guard, in panther form, lies hidden on a nearby rooftop to observe everything by order of the baron. The baron himself lies in a trance in Castle Pantara, watching everything through his rooftop minion's eyes. If von Kharkov sees the PCs interfere with the lottery, the rooftop **werepanther** (38 hp) resumes human shape and shoots at the PCs with his heavy crossbow. The werepanthers on the coach are from the blockhouse at Castle Pantara; the other seven are permanently assigned to Habelnik.

Werepanther (10): INT very; AL LE; AC 2 [4]; MV 12 [15]; HD 5 + 1; hp 41, 39, 38, 37 (× 3), 36 (× 3), 33; THAC0 15; #AT 2 [3]; Dmg by weapon type [claw/claw/bite for 1-3/1-3/1-6]; SA shape change to panther [rear claws for 1-4/1-4]; [SD surprised only on a 1, struck only by silver or magical weapons]; SZ M; ML 14 (20 if von Kharkov is under attack); XP 975; new monster; *mace* + 1, long knife. Statistics in brackets represent a werepanther's cat form.

If a werepanther is reduced to 15 hp or less in its human form, it will shape-change to panther form. Any PC who witnesses this change should make a horror check.

When the baron observes any party interference, he waits for five rounds to see if the werepanthers can take care of the PCs by themselves. He has the power to issue a mental command to anyone he has bitten, a group that includes more than half the population of Valachan. The baron's commands must be obeyed unless a saving throw vs. spell is made. If von Kharkov sees that



the Black Leopards are going to be defeated, he issues mental commands to the inhabitants of Habelnik, ordering them to destroy the PCs.

At the end of the fifth round of battle with the werepanthers, or whenever the PCs seem about to defeat the baron's minions, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

In the midst of the battle, you notice that many of the townspeople have returned to the square. They all seem to be staring into the distance with a strange, glazed look. Those who have daggers have pulled them out. Others have found clubs, loose bricks, and stones. Still more townspeople come out of a store carrying axes and pitchforks. As they approach you, they smile crookedly and raise their weapons.

This is an excellent time for the PCs to retreat. Although the townspeople are all zero-level, a thousand of them converging on the PCs can be very dangerous. Townspeople not under the baron's control scream in terror and run away to hide in their homes with the

doors securely bolted. No one will give the PCs sanctuary. If the PCs hole up in a building and prepare for a siege, the *charmed* mob will try to set the structure on fire and roast the PCs alive.

Killing lots of townspeople is not a good option for the PCs. The DM should emphasize the reactions of the villagers who are not *charmed*, so the PCs can deduce that the masses trying to kill them are just helpless pawns. There is a line between self-defense and wanton destruction, and PCs engaging in the latter should be required to roll one or more Ravenloft powers checks. The DM should emphasize up the scene's terror value but avoid a protracted battle between the PCs and poorly armed villagers. Any plan the PCs come up with to get out of town should be encouraged (but the townspeople throw a few bricks and stones at them as they leave).

If the PCs have diligently tried to rescue the bride or disrupt the lottery, the DM should go to the sidebar "Felkovic's Spirit" and take the PCs through that encounter when they have escaped the mob.

The PCs gain no special prize for rescuing Maria, because she is also

under von Kharkov's massive *charm* spell. She smiles gratefully, embraces the manliest PC carrying a dagger or short sword, unsheathes it, and tries to slip it between his ribs. Other PCs may make Intelligence checks to notice the attempt. If the check is successful, roll initiative to see if the PCs can stop Maria. On her first strike, Maria gets +8 to hit (the defender gets no Dexterity bonuses), and she inflicts triple damage if successful.

Maria Casalsa, human female: AL N; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; I 9; ML 7.

Note: The PCs enter Valachan close to its northern border, so it is unlikely they will travel to the town of Rotwald, which lies south of Castle Pantara. If, however, the PCs travel to Rotwald while following up on the information that Nadia went home to live with her mother, the DM may want to move "The Lottery" to that town. The adventurers will not, however, find Felkovic's wife or her mother here. The Black Leopards took Nadia away secretly just before her mother's home burned down in a "tragic accident."

Nadia's Visit

Von Kharkov keeps four nosferatu slaves: Lady Adeline, an elf; Brother Homer, the baron's priest; Korby, the cook; and Nadia, Felkovic's wife. The first three stay in the castle, while Nadia roams throughout Valachan, keeping an eye on things for the baron. At night she sleeps in coffins scattered throughout the domain. Nadia secretly hates von Kharkov for separating her from her husband and taking her into the realm of the undead. At the same time, she is insanely jealous whenever the baron brings home a new bride, and is fearful that he will destroy her in favor of his newest love.

On the third night in Valachan, Nadia visits the PCs. When the party has turned in for the night, she assumes gaseous form, drifts over to the closest guard, resumes corporeal form, and attempts to *charm* him before draining. Even if the PC makes his save, he must still make a horror check once he sees Nadia's vampiric teeth.

If Nadia comes within 20' of the *cat* of *Felkovic*, it sends frantic mental pushes to its owner, begging to be let out of its backpack or purse. The PCs who owns the *cat* must make a successful Consti-

tution check (check once each round) in order to wake up. On the third round the *cat* changes form no matter where it is, clawing its way out of the backpack or chest and attacking Nadia. After the *cat's* first attack, it backs off quickly; Felkovic's spirit is shocked when he recognizes this vampire as his wife. While the *cat* is within 20' of Nadia, she cannot take gaseous form, but once attacked by a PC or the *cat*, she will defend herself. If she cannot *charm* a PC and convince him to defend her, she will shapechange into panther form. (Remember that on this night, the *cat* is also in panther form.) Because of the *cat's* reluctance to attack Felkovic's wife, the PCs are on their own to destroy Nadia. Upon her true death, she reverts to human form, and whispers, "Destroy my master and free this land. Only bone can truly pierce his heart." Nadia discovered the baron's vulnerability to bone when she stabbed him with an ivory-handled dagger during one of their many quarrels. The metal blade was merely an annoyance, but when the bone handle entered the wound, von Kharkov went berserk and nearly destroyed her.

After the PCs have destroyed Nadia, the *cat* walks over, sniffs at the remains, and then goes off to wowl mournfully at the night sky for a solid hour. No one will be able to approach the *cat* during this time. When it has howled its grief in private, the *cat* returns to the PCs, and the DM may run the encounter with "Felkovic's Spirit" found in the sidebar on page 53, modifying the ghost's text to reflect his anguish at learning what happened to his beloved Nadia.

Nadia, nosferatu vampire: INT very; AL CE; AC 1; MV 12 (15 panther form); HD 8 + 3; hp 43; THAC0 13 (11 with weapon); #AT 1 (3 in panther form); Dmg by weapon type +4 (Strength bonus); 1-3/1-3/1-6 in panther form; SA rear claws 1-4 hp each if both front paws hit, *charm*, Constitution drain, *charm* previous victim; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M; ML 16; XP 2,000; MC15.

Castle Pantara

After their encounter with Felkovic's spirit, the PCs should head for Castle Pantara. Just before they get there, the DM should give them a break and allow one good rest period so the adventurers can regain spells and hit points. They'll

need them.

The time of day when the PCs arrive at the castle will dictate which monsters are guarding the premises and what tactics they use. During the daytime, when the baron, Korby, and Brother Homer lie vulnerable in their coffins, the elf vampire Lady Adeline guards the castle walls. (Elf vampires are active only during the day. See MC10.) At night, the baron and his two nosferatu slaves keep the castle safe, although they do not patrol the walls or perimeter. (The baron believes it unthinkable that anyone would visit at night.) Several other monsters are active at all times within the castle.

Fifteen Black Leopards live in a blockhouse at the foot of the castle's hill; the Baron or Lady Adeline will summon these guards if the PCs pose a serious threat. Von Kharkov houses these Black Leopards in a separate structure because, in his paranoia, he does not want any more living creatures in the castle than necessary. The townspeople who live in the castle while on levy duty are quite enough. The blockhouse itself is a 30' x 30' two-story log building. The first floor is one large community room used for dining, cooking, and entertaining. Sleeping quarters take up the second floor.

Some of the Black Leopards stationed here may have been killed by the PCs at the lottery in Habelnik. The DM should adjust their numbers accordingly.

Werepanthers (15): hp 41, 39 (×2), 38, 37 (×6), 34, 33 (×3), 30; other statistics as in "The Lottery." Three of the werepanthers each carry a *mace* +1, another a *mace* +2.

Next to the blockhouse is a long one-story building that stables eight draft horses and three medium war horses beneath a loft that holds stores of oats and grain. Even though most animals do not get along with lycanthropes, these horses have gotten used to the werepanthers. Most stables are plagued with rodents, but there is nary a mouse dropping to be found here. If the *cat* of *Felkovic* is active and enters the stable, the horses scream in terror and do their best to kick open their stalls and stam-pede, possibly trampling the PCs in the process (for 5d4 hp damage).

The back room of the stable is a garage for three coaches and the carriage mentioned in "The Lottery." The coaches transport townspeople levied for castle duty.

Unless there are loud explosions, bright flashes, or some other extraordinary commotion from a battle near the blockhouse, nobody from the castle will notice what happens here. The werepanthers constantly quarrel among themselves, so the baron and his servants don't bother to investigate every time they have a fracas.

The following description assumes a daylight approach to the castle from the north. The DM should make any adjustments necessary to compensate for the PCs' direction of march:

As you travel toward Castle Pantara, you feel as if something is watching you all the way. Your hair has a disturbing tendency to stand on end at the slightest sound, and your palms are sweaty. You get the distinct feeling that you are marching to your doom.

From the only clear spot for miles, where trees do not block the view, you glimpse a stone keep built on a high hill. But this is much more than an ordinary keep; the castle is big enough to hold a small army easily. A steep path winds up the hill, leaving travelers exposed to missile fire from the ominous battlements. A wooden blockhouse and a long outbuilding stand among a grove of trees at the foot of the hill.

Two werepanthers patrol the castle perimeter and blockhouse at all times, but they are easily spotted. Each turn the PCs spend on the path going up to the castle, a roll of 1 on 1d8 indicates that the PCs can see the guards—and vice versa. It will take three turns to walk up the pathway to the castle. If the PCs climb the hill to scale a castle wall, it takes 12 turns of climbing to reach the castle, so the guards will be in sight for at least one turn. If the PCs attack the patrolling guards, one of the guards blows a whistle that calls the other Black Leopards to the scene within one turn.

Before the PCs reach the castle itself, the DM should determine locations for the vampires within. (See "Where Are the Vampires?" sidebar.)

Ground Floor

1. Walkway. A 10'-wide steep walkway winds up the hill to the looming presence of Castle Pantara. The walk is called the Tail because its position and landscaping relative to the castle make

it look like a big cat's tail. The ground on either side of the walkway is very steep and often there is loose rock underfoot. Each turn that a PC goes off the walkway requires a Dexterity check to avoid a fall. (Falling PCs take 1-6 hp damage for each 10' fallen. The highest point of the walkway, where it enters the castle, looms 300' above ground level.) Scraggly bushes grow on the slopes below the Tail. For every 10' a PC falls, a successful combined Strength and Dexterity check (add the two scores together) on 3d20 indicates that the PC has grabbed a bush to halt the fall. PCs with mountaineering proficiency can avoid much of the danger of traveling the Tail, using ropes to prevent a long fall.

Lady Adeline, the elf vampire who patrols the castle walls, has an 80% chance to spot any PCs climbing the Tail during the day. If the PCs avoid the walkway by using mountaineering proficiency or a thief's climb-walls talent, her chance to spot them is reduced to 40%.

A daylight entry can be deadlier than one at night, because Lady Adeline will harass the PCs all the way into the castle and after their entry. As the PCs climb the walkway, she casts a *sticks to snakes* spell on prepositioned piles of wood, then peppers the PCs from the rear (negating Dexterity bonus to armor class) with bone-tipped arrows from arrow slits in the Rake (area 7). She moves from slit to slit for subsequent shots; if necessary she casts a *wall of thorns* spell to block escape attempts.

If the PCs escape the ambush area, Lady Adeline proceeds to the main audience chamber (area 10), and waits by an arrow slit to shoot at the party as it emerges from the gate house (area 3). Any PC who tries to take cover behind one of the trees in the courtyard (area 4) must contend with the four panthers in that area. If the PCs dispose of the panthers, Lady Adeline casts her *entangle* spell to snare some PCs, then shoots more bone-tipped arrows into their dangling bodies. Lady Adeline is not very nice but is a bit cocky, which is why she delays before summoning any werepanthers to her aid. If, however, she sees *cat of Felkovic* in smilodon form, she blows the hunting horn at her side to summon all werepanthers to the castle at once.

Once any PC gets close enough to melee, Adeline pulls back her veil to reveal her twisted, scarred visage. Any-

one who gets a good look at her face must make a saving throw vs. paralysis.

Lady Adeline, elf vampire: INT genius; AL LE; AC 2 (-8 when shooting from an arrow slit); MV 15; HD 7 +3; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT by weapon type; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to attack rolls/+3 Dmg bonus in melee from 18/01 Strength, +5 to all missile-fire attack rolls (+4 for being undead and +1 for being an elf), +1 to attack rolls with long sword, Charisma drain in unarmed combat, twisted visage forces viewer to save vs. paralysis or stand paralyzed for 1-4 rounds after vampire has left (victim instantly dies on roll of natural 1), shapechange into wild eagle or giant eagle retaining her natural vampiric powers, immunities, and vulnerabilities (see below); SD +1 or better weapon to hit, regenerates 2 hp per round, unaffected by holy water; MR immune to mental attacks, half damage from magical fire and cold spells; SZ M; ML 16; XP 6,000; MC10.

Spells: *entangle*, *warp wood*, *snare*, *spike growth*, and *anti-animal shell* (each three times per day), *wall of thorns*, *sticks to snakes*, *giant insect*

Where Are the Vampires?

Daylight

Lady Adeline: Patrolling the walls (area 24).

Baron von Kharkov: If PCs have not been detected, roll d%. 1-65: Coffin in area 26. 66-00: Coffin in area 30. If PCs have been detected: 1-25: Coffin in area 30. 26-00: Coffin in area 32.

Korby, the cook: If PCs have not been detected, in coffin in area 17. If PCs have been detected, in coffin in area 30.

Brother Homer: If PCs have not been detected, in coffin in area 20 (under bed). If PCs have been detected, in coffin in area 30.

Night

Lady Adeline: Roll d%. 1-75: In coffin in area 21. 76-00: In spare coffin in area 9.

Baron von Kharkov: If PCs have not been detected, he is with his bride (area 27). Otherwise, he is looking for the PCs with every monster at his disposal.

Korby, the cook: See areas 8, 16, and 17.

Brother Homer: See areas 19, 20, and 22.



(each once per day), *transport via plants* ability, *pass without trace* and *invisibility to animals* at will.

Lady Adeline is armed with a *long bow* +1 (+6 on attack rolls for missile attacks), 30 bone-tipped sheaf arrows, a *long sword* +2, and a *dagger* +1. In melee she fights with the long sword in one hand and dagger in the other.

Eagle, wild: MV 1, fly 30 (C); #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1; other statistics as for Lady Adeline's elf vampire form.

Eagle, giant: MV 3, fly 48 (D); #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; other statistics as for Lady Adeline's elf vampire form.

In contrast to this fierce daytime reception, no one guards the walls at night. Anyone foolish enough to enter Castle Pantara at night is welcome to the reception found there. Baron von Kharkov does, however, keep the main gate closed at night so that the smilodon cat he so greatly fears cannot enter.

2. Guard Tower. This small tower straddling the walkway to the castle is never occupied. A bas-relief of a panther head seems to glow at everyone who travels the path. Open entrances in the north and south walls of the tower are

blocked by sturdy portculli. Inside, the tower is dirty and full of dead leaves. The simple winches that control the portculli are mounted high on the inside walls, just out of reach for humans.

A successful check for secret doors reveals a small loose stone in the wall to the west of the northern portculli. The stone can be removed to uncover a handle that raises the portcullis with a horrendous moan and clanking of chains. During the day, the noise automatically alerts Lady Adeline, and it always doubles the chance of meeting the roving patrol of werepanthers. A similar but clearly visible lever on the south wall opens that side's portcullis.

PCs can use their bend bars/lift gates ability to get in, or they can avoid entering the tower by climbing over it. This works as long as the PCs move along the 3'-wide stone perimeter of the tower top and do not walk on the rotten flooring of the upper level. Placing more than 50 lbs. on the wood planks breaks the weak flooring and drops the offending creature to the bottom of the tower (2d6 hp damage).

The PCs may also walk around the tower. PCs walking around the west

side must make two Dexterity checks or fall down the hill. The east side looks safer, but the baron has placed two camouflaged bear traps here to snare his smilodon cat nemesis if it snoops around. Each PC has a 90% chance of stepping into one of these traps unless he discovers them with a *find traps* or *find snares and pits* spell. The trap's unfortunate victim takes 1-8 hp damage, and his movement is halved until the PC has two full days of rest. To pry open a trap, no more than two of the victim's friends (but not the victim) must pull against the jaws with a combined Strength of 30.

3. Gate house. The last section of walkway passes under three winged panther statues that seem to eye the PCs suspiciously; they are finely crafted stone and nothing more. Beyond the statues, large black iron double doors are closed and locked (-20% to open-locks rolls); only Baron von Kharkov has the key. The lowered portcullis behind the door can be lifted with a bend bars/lift gates roll, and up to four PCs can combine their percentages. This portcullis also creaks and groans horribly when raised or lowered.

The inside of the gatehouse is bare, containing only the mechanism for working the portcullis and a ladder set into the east wall. The ceiling is pierced by several large slits, each about 12" long and 5" wide. No light comes from the slits, but soft sounds filter down from above. The DM should encourage the PCs to believe that someone may lurk above, ready to pour down burning oil or shoot deadly arrows into their midst.

The PCs can climb the ladder to the upper room of the gate house. The second floor is equally bare, except for a few pigeon feathers and droppings. Another ladder leads up through an opening in the ceiling. From the equally abandoned third floor, the PCs can climbing onto the uppermost walkway around the castle. An old ballista is mounted on the gate house roof, but it has not been maintained and is useless.

4. Courtyard. Alter the following description if the PCs enter at night and have no light source.

The trampled dirt of this huge cobblestoned courtyard grows little but occasional tufts of yellow grass. A

Panthers (4): INT semi; AL N; AC 6: MV 15; HD 3 + 2; hp 26 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA rear claws rake for 1-4 hp damage each if both front paws hit, -3 penalty on victim's surprise roll; SD surprised only on a 1; SZ M (4½' long); ML 10; XP 420 each; MM/36 (Great Cat, Leopard).

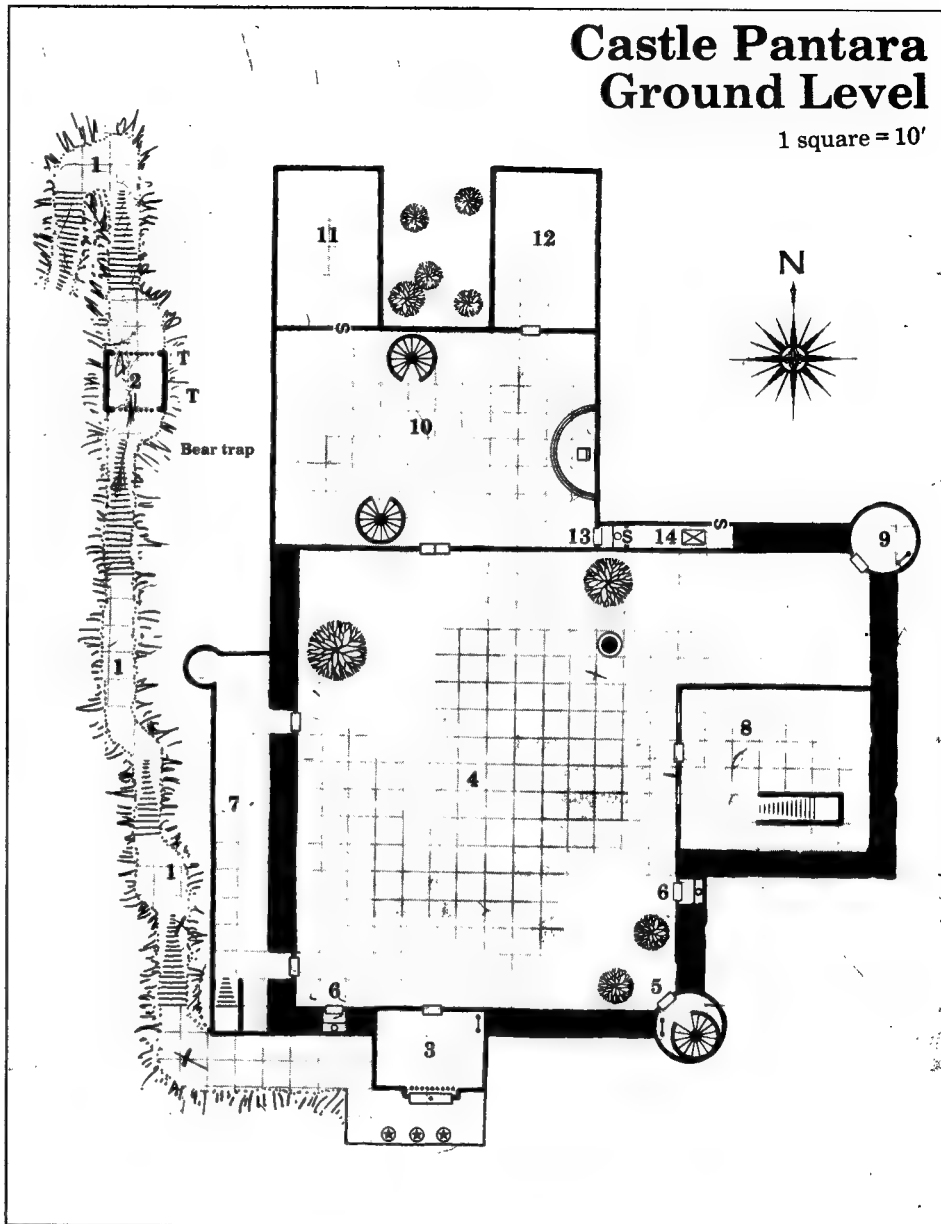
6. Latrines. These outhouses are dark and confining, with waste holes that go down 20'. Only the latrine just south of the manor house has been used recently (by the levies quartered in area 8).

7. The Rake. These barracks were constructed so that soldiers inside and on the walls could pepper intruders on the Tail with missiles, and that is just what Lady Adeline will do if she ambushes the PCs as they try to climb the walkway. Dust and cobwebs fill both floors of the barracks. The furniture is old but quite sturdy and looks unused.

If the PCs escape Adeline's ambush and look for her here, they find only her footprints in the dusty floor. The roof supports two old ballistae and one catapult, all in disrepair.

8. Manor House. The door to this structure is unlocked, and the following description should be read to the players once the PCs open it. The windows are so grimy that nothing can be seen inside. The description assumes a daylight entry and should be altered if the PCs visit at night.

1 square = 10'



As the door opens, you are nearly overwhelmed by the sharp, overpowering odor of vinegar and other spices. Several listless peasants chop vegetables, then pass the food to others who dump it into large heated vats. After stirring the contents with long-handled paddles for several minutes, the cooks scoop out the cooked vegetables and pack them into jars and barrels. The choppers put down their knives and shuffle over to pour an acrid liquid over the vegetables before sealing

them all up with wooden lids held down by heavy iron weights. All of the peasants move as if sleepwalking, and a few appear quite pale. When they see you, they cast their eyes to the floor and keep on working.

These people were levied from Rotwald to work in the castle, and they will be of little help to the PCs (all are zero-level humans). The townspeople think that the PCs are authorized visitors, as no one would dare visit the baron uninvited. The levies are restricted to the manor house and the area immediately around it (between the well and the latrine to the south) unless they have an escort. Once a week, one of the Black Leopards escorts the men (10 of the 15 levies) beyond the castle walls to chop wood. Occasionally, some of the levies are selected for special jobs during the day or night. The panthers in the courtyard ensure that the levies do not wander off.

All of the levies were *charmed* by von Kharkov when they first arrived. Although they are overworked and not paid for their services, they like the baron, whom they call a great and generous master. The levies do not see him except occasionally at night. They are not fond of Lady Adeline, whom they call "the veiled woman warrior." If the PCs examine these people closely, they can see small bite marks on the conscripts' necks, which the townspeople insist are insect bites. They admit that they all seem to have mild cases of white fever but are certain that they will recover. (The baron's priest, Brother Homer, told them so.) Two of the townspeople, however, lie on makeshift cots upstairs, quite ill with the fever, and all of the villagers are concerned about them.

The barrels and boxes stacked about the room are filled with pickled vegetables. The baron buys much of the year's crop from the peasants, then preserves the vegetables in brine and sells them back to the villagers for their own consumption or for resale to traders from other domains who come wandering through Valachan. The Vistani gypsies particularly relish these pickled foodstuffs.

The preparation area contains several cookbooks on canning and pickling processes, for which a master chef would pay as much as 5,000 gp. (Knowledge of food preservation secrets could be priceless in a land where famine might otherwise wipe out much of the

population.) Several containers of vinegar and spices are piled in a corner.

The people levied from Rotwald have some information of value that may help the PCs figure out both the best time to strike against the baron and who (or what) guards the premises. Just after dawn each day, the villager who worked the hardest on the previous day is taken by "the veiled woman warrior" for a tour of the castle. Actually, this unfortunate person is taken to a tower room to satisfy Adeline's appetite. Being selected for this tour is not high on the villagers' wish list, since Lady Adeline has a haughty, intimidating bearing. They often draw straws to figure out who will be chosen. Alert PCs may notice that the villagers who have gone on this tour have scarred faces and show no initiative or other leadership potential. (Lady Adeline drains Charisma.)

Just after dusk, Korby the cook arrives to select two villagers to do some chores in the keep. One is selected to help clean the chapel (and be drained by Brother Homer), and another to clean the kitchen (and be drained by Korby). Three times a week, a third villager is chosen to shine the baron's boots and clean his quarters. On these evenings, the baron is giving his bride a rest from draining, and this honor falls on one of the peasants. Whoever is selected for this duty always comes back tired but remarks how wonderful it is to serve the lord and master of the domain.

On the second floor of this building, 15 cots are separated by hanging curtains. Only the area within 10' of the fireplace on the east wall is warm. The smell of vinegar permeates this area as it does the floor below. Two cots are occupied by pale townspeople, levies who have been drained nearly dry by von Kharkov and his slaves.

9. Northeast Tower. A ladder secured on the inside, southeast wall goes up into darkness. There is nothing of interest on the ground floor, but the upper room houses a coffin. When the coffin is opened, *continual light* shines out from the inside of the lid. This is the spare coffin of Lady Adeline, and there is a 25% chance that she is resting in here during the evening hours. (See "Where Are the Vampires?" on page 59.) An door in the south wall of this upper room opens onto the castle walkway, and a ladder goes up through a trap door in the ceiling to the tower roof. The view north overlooks the blockhouse,

stables, and main road.

10. Main Audience Chamber. Above the double doors in the courtyard, a remarkably well-carved panther statue crouches as if ready to spring. Its head detects as magical, but this is nothing more than a *Nystul's magical aura* spell (cast by a prior nosferatu slave who was a wizard) designed to delay intruders until they are noticed by the panthers in the courtyard. The doors are unlocked and swing both ways on their hinges, although they can be barred from the inside to resist an assault.

When the PCs enter the audience chamber, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You see a magnificent chamber with an elegantly winding staircase leading to upper floors. To the east, a raised dais supports an ebony chair carved like the open mouth of a panther. Black pelts line the chair and spill onto the dais. Only a few other chairs and benches are provided here. The chill of the room is only partially alleviated by the heavy tapestries that line the walls, tapestries skillfully woven with woodland scenes of predator cats running down helpless people.

As soon as anyone other than a vampire or werepanther (or someone escorted by one of these) enters, the secret door to area 11 opens and a mechanical golem resembling a large metal dog comes out to kill the trespassers. The baron commissioned the construction of this golem at enormous expense, reasoning that a big dog would be the best protection against a big cat. Von Kharkov named the golem Rowlf after its eerie, metallic bark.

The device is constructed of various metal cogs, wheels, armor plates, etc. Its oversized head is equipped with five broad, pointed metallic teeth in each jaw. These teeth are *daggers +1*, but their magic can't be detected unless someone inspects the head carefully after the golem has been defeated, because the entire construct is magical. When the golem moves, it makes a rickety-clickity-clackity sound, but it is far from fragile. If the *cat of Felkovic* is animate when the golem emerges, the mechanical device attacks it first.

The PCs may find Rowlf a formidable opponent and wish to flee the room. The

golem doesn't know how to open a closed door, and it moves at half speed going up stairs.

Rowlf (Ravenloft mechanical golem): INT non; AL N; AC -2; MV 12; HD 13; hp 75; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 10d4 + 10; SA electric shock for 6d6 hp damage on roll of natural 20 by golem or by opponent if opponent is using metal weapon (save vs. spell for half damage and save vs. paralysis to avoid incapacitation for 2d4 rounds), lightning aura of small bolts to all within 20' for 3d6 hp damage (usable every other round, save vs. breath weapon for half damage, exposed items must save vs. lightning to avoid destruction); SZ M; ML 20; XP 15,000; MC10.

If Lady Adeline has retreated here, the PCs will have a difficult time closing for combat. If the PCs rush the door, she retreats partway up the stairs and waits for them to enter the room. When all her targets are clear, she fires away with her bow, concentrating on spellcasters. Of course, the PCs' entry will activate Rowlf, and the PCs will have their hands full with that monster.

11-12. Deserted Rooms. These rooms are unremarkable and very dusty. Rowlf, the mechanical golem, occupies area 11 when it is not activated. The room's arrow slits have been mortared up.

13. Latrine. This appears to be yet another outhouse like the others (area 6), but a secret door is located above the wooden toilet box on the east wall.

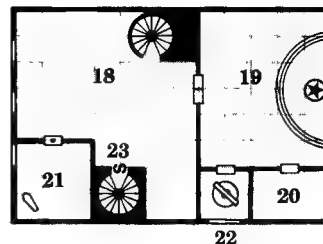
14. Secret Passage. This passage is shrouded with dust and cobwebs, although the small spiders that live here are quite harmless. Thirty feet down the corridor, a concealed pit trap waits to drop the unwary 20' onto 10 rusty spears. Any weight over 50 lbs. triggers the trap. A victim must make a Dexterity check with a -2 penalty to grasp the side of the pit. Failure results in 2d6 hp falling damage and 1-6 hp spear damage (from each of 1-6 spears). A saving throw vs. poison is required for each spear strike to avoid a disease.

Beyond the trap, a secret door opens to the outside. If the Black Leopard guards come to the aid of the castle, they assume panther form and scramble up the hill to the secret door in a single round. One of them resumes human form to open it. Once over the pit, they all take human form to go through the

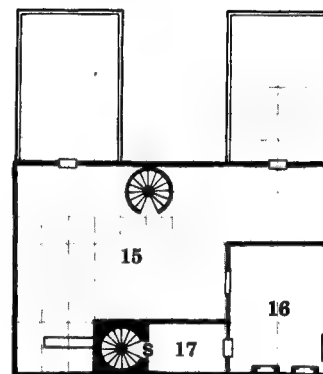
Castle Pantara Levels 2-3

1 square = 10'

Third Floor



Second Floor



secret door into the latrine, then disperse in the main hall to go wherever they are needed. Their keen hearing allows them to pinpoint battles quickly.

Second Floor

15. Banquet Hall. All the fine furniture here is covered with dust. Several long tables, dozens of chairs, and an enormous china cabinet stand ready for a roomful of guests—but none have been invited here in years. The cabinet contains enough utensils for 100 place settings. The utensils and china are of fine quality and may fetch as much as 1,200 gp. Frescoes on the wall show big cats feeding on freshly killed prey. Footprints in the dust of the floor travel between the kitchen (area 16) and the stairwell. Two doors in the north wall lead to outside verandas furnished with badly rusted black metal settees.

The bar in the southwest corner of the banquet hall is stocked with fine assorted liquors (value 1,000 gp). On the bar beside a jar of walnuts is a decorative wooden nutcracker carved in the shape of a toy soldier. Whenever anyone other than a nosferatu or werepanther enters, the nutcracker immediately animates and

attacks. It is a doll golem that the paranoid Baron bought a few years ago from a band of wandering Vistani. When the golem animates, it takes on a horrid wide-eyed look and moves quickly to bite with its small but deadly teeth.

Doll golem: INT non; AL N; AC 4; MV 15; HD 10; hp 40; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6; SA bitten victim must save vs. spell or laugh uncontrollably, damage increases by 1d4 hp per round until victim dies or a *dispel magic* spell is cast; SD immune to all magical attacks except *warp wood* (acts as a *slow* spell) and fire-based attacks (half damage); SZ T (1' tall); ML 20; XP 7,000; MM/168.

An attack by the doll golem has a 70% chance of alerting the vampire cook, Korby, in area 16.

16. Kitchen. In contrast to the banquet hall, the kitchen is well maintained. Logs are neatly stacked in the twin fireplaces. The food preparation tables have been scrubbed clean, and an assortment of utensils, pots, and pans hangs neatly from hooks on the walls. The nosferatu slave, Korby, works here from dusk to midnight preparing supper and the next day's breakfast and lunch

for the townspeople who work in the castle. One of the townspeople from the manor house (area 8) always assists Korby each evening.

Korby is definitely not the dashing vampire type. The lack of hair on his head is balanced by the stained white beard that hangs down over his fat stomach. If confronted, Korby attacks with a carving knife (Dmg 1-4) in one hand and a butcher's cleaver (Dmg 1-6) in the other. The **kitchen helper** (AC 10; hp 4; 0-level human) grabs a poker (Dmg 1-3) and tries to help her good friend the cook.

Korby, nosferatu vampire: INT 14; AL NE; AC 1; MV 12; HD 8+3; hp 44; THAC0 13 (11 with weapon); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +4 (Strength bonus); SA *charm* gaze, shapechange to panther form, Constitution drain, *charm* previously bitten victim; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M (5'9" tall); ML 16; XP 2,000; MC15.

17. Cook's Quarters. This dark room is lined with shelves of dried foodstuffs, pickled vegetables of all types, and several spices—but no garlic. A plain wooden coffin stands beside a comfortable sofa in one corner of the room. The coffin is Korby's; the sofa provides a place for his evening helper to rest after kitchen duty. If the PCs wander in after midnight, Korby is here. There is a 35% chance they catch Korby in the act of draining his victim (a horror check is appropriate). If he is disturbed, Korby grabs an old mace from under the couch and attacks.

In the center of the west wall, a secret door leads opens onto a stairway that goes down to the dungeon level. Korby uses this route to take food to any prisoners being held down there.

Third Floor

18. Study & Library. An enormous library and study occupies most of this floor. The area is furnished with comfortable chairs and sofas, a work table, and many shelves of books. None of the books are magical. Many deal with cats of all sorts, but one book of particular interest is Baron von Kharkov's diary, which lies on the work table. If the PCs read this book, they can learn much about von Kharkov's background, his plot to take Nadia, his run-in with the *cat of Felkovic*, etc. (See "For the Dungeon Master" and "The Tale of

Felkovic and his Cat.")

The shelves and floor of the library contain almost three dozen statues and figurines of every type of cat the PCs have ever seen (and some they have never seen before). The smallest of the figures is a 1"-high curio; the largest is a tailless brass manx standing 4' tall. Predators as well as domestic cats are represented in the collection.

It was on one of these shelves that von Kharkov placed the jade figurine that is the *cat of Felkovic* after finding it on the floor in area 28. None of the statues here are magical, and individually they have little value. But as a collection they could be sold for 950 gp due to their fine workmanship.

19. Chapel. This well-maintained place of worship contains highly polished pews and a large statue of a deity (any lawful-evil deity that the PCs would recognize). In front of the statue is a pulpit with a small slotted box. Even as a nosferatu, Brother Homer retains his clerical abilities and receives spells. Once a week, the town levies are brought to the chapel and Brother Homer preaches a sermon on the virtues of obeying the established power of the land. Any PC putting an offering in the coin box (or for that matter, stealing coins from the box) should make a Ravenloft Powers check. The box holds two gold pantherheads and three electrum cateyes.

If the PCs come here before midnight, they find a middle-aged village woman cleaning and polishing. Her name is Anna, and she politely asks the PCs their names and their business here. If the adventurers even hint at violence, she cries for help. There is a 15% chance that Brother Homer in area 20 will hear her.

Anna: AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (broom handle); ML 6.

Brother Homer, nosferatu vampire: INT highly; AL LE; AC 0; MV 12; HD 8+3; hp 51; THAC0 13 (8 with weapon); #AT 1; Dmg by spell, or by weapon type +4 (Strength bonus); SA *charm* gaze, shapechange to panther form, Constitution drain, *charm* previously bitten victim, spells as 9th-level priest with 18 Wisdom; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; SZ M (5'9" tall); ML 16; XP 2,000; MC15; *chain mail* +1, *hammer* +3.

Spells: *command*, *cure light wounds*, *curse*, *darkness* (×2), *protection from good*; *enthrall*, *heat metal*, *hold person*

(×2), *silence* 15' radius, *wyvern watch*; *animate dead*, *cause blindness*, *dispel magic*, *prayer*; *free action*, *poison*, *sticks to snakes*; *flame strike*.

Before battling the PCs, Homer casts as many protective spells as he can (in order: *protection from good*, *prayer*, *free action*). If he has a chance, he casts *sticks to snakes* (on the mop and broom used by the villager). His main offensive spells are *hold person* (used on warriors) and *silence* 15' radius (to neutralize spellcasters). His *flame strike* spell is reserved for any hero who appears to be a paladin or good-aligned priest.

20. Cleric's Quarters.

A luxurious bed, freestanding closet, small desk, and chair make up the furnishings of this room. A small replica of the statue in the chapel is surrounded by black candles. Hand-painted scenes of black panthers running down game and feasting on their kills provide macabre decor.

The bed frame sits high off the floor, allowing clearance for the secret trap door under it to open. The enclosed space below the floorboards holds Brother Homer's coffin. Homer rests here during the day, but if the castle has been alerted, he takes his rest in one of the coffins on the dungeon level (area 30). Between midnight and 2:00 A.M., the priest leisurely drains his current night's victim on the bed. PCs intruding on this scene certainly need to make a horror check.

21. Adeline's Quarters. Not only is the door to this room locked at all times, it is also barred from the inside at night. All that is in here is a coffin. The window in the west wall has iron bars.

If the PCs enter this room in the evening, they may (75% chance) find Lady Adeline resting in her coffin. (See "Where Are the Vampires?" on page 59.) A *continual light* spell has been cast on the inside of Adeline's coffin lid, permitting her to rest comfortably (darkness is harmful to a vampire elf). If she's not here, Lady Adeline rests in an identical coffin on the second floor of the northeast tower (area 9).

22. Bell Room. If Brother Homer encounters or detects the PCs, he will try to reach this room to ring the enormous bell that alerts every nosferatu and werepanther in the area. Once he

hears the bell, von Kharkov uses his *mass charm* ability on the 15 villagers in the manor house to command them to search for and destroy the intruders.

23. Secret Entrance. Von Kharkov visits the dungeon level through this secret door. It is absolutely dark in the stairwell; the PCs must have a light to avoid falling down the narrow, extremely steep stairs (for 3d6 falling damage). A bad odor permeates the area, and cobwebs are woven between the walls. (The spiders are harmless.)

Fourth Floor

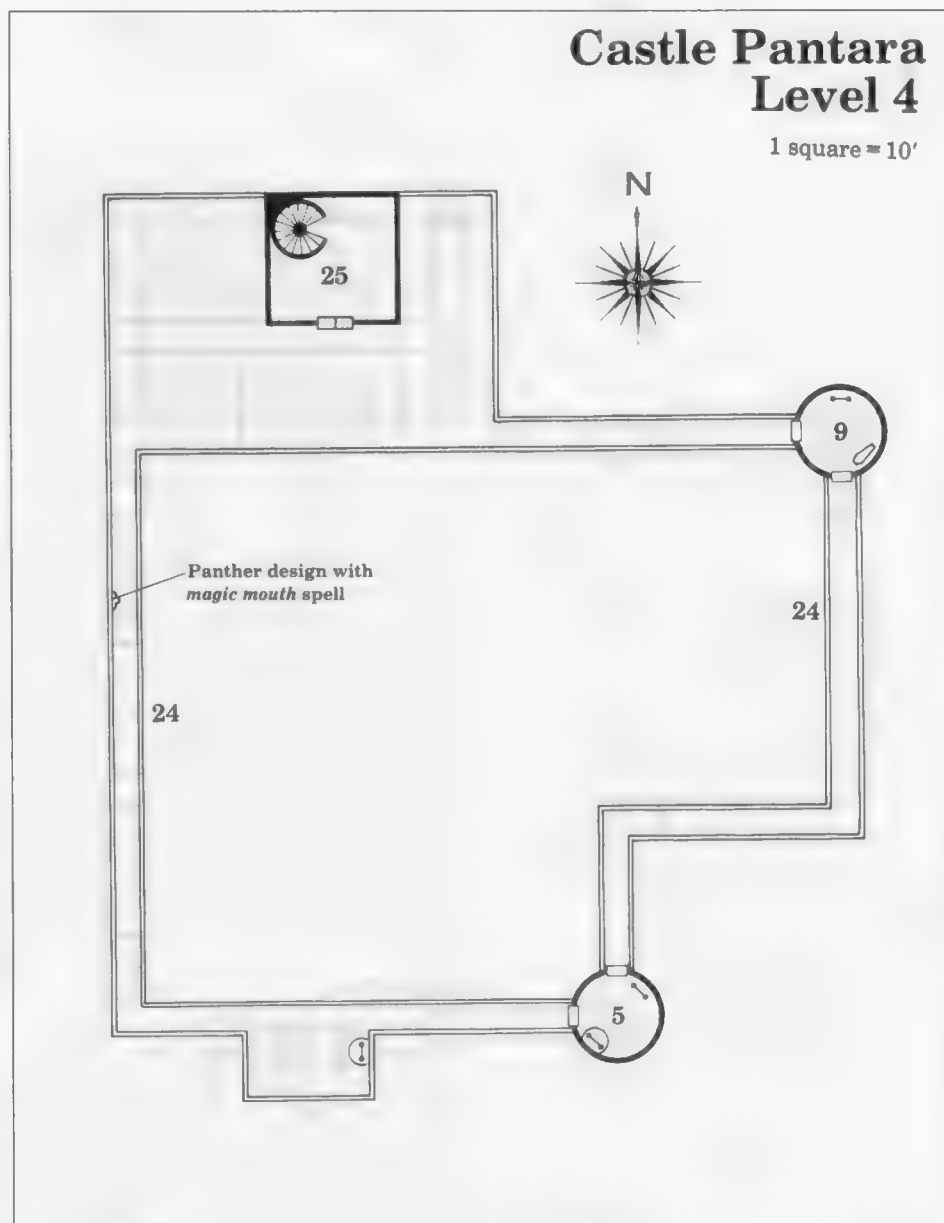
24. Walls. The crenelated walls of Castle Pantara provide good cover for anyone shooting missiles from the castle. The walkway around the perimeter is quite sturdy, but there are no walls around the inside. The interior of the walls is carved with fierce panther heads. One head on the west wall has a *magic mouth* spell on it, cast long ago by a wizard slave of von Kharkov. Whenever anyone other than a nosferatu or werepanther passes this carving it emits a shrill panther scream, with the same consequences as ringing the bell (area 22).

Anyone who falls or gets pushed off the wall takes 4d6 hp damage from the 40' drop.

25. Guardian's Lair. The stairway entrance to this musty room has a powerful guardian: a 12'-tall giant skeleton created by Brother Homer as a gift for Von Kharkov. The baron rewarded Homer with two town levies all for himself. (These unfortunates died from white fever while returning to their homes.)

Von Kharkov placed this skeleton here to guard against intruders coming up the stairwell or through the doors from the ramparts. The skeleton will try to destroy any intruder. If the skeleton releases its *fireball* attack, everyone in Castle Pantara will be alerted by the low thumping noise of the explosion. The creaking bones and unholy fire that burns in the skeleton's rib cage certainly merit a horror check.

Giant skeleton: INT non; AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4 + 4; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12 (bone-tipped spear); SA fireball once every hour for 8d6 hp damage; SD immune to normal and magical fire as well as *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and other mind-affecting spells, cold-based



spells and edged or piercing weapons do half damage, missiles inflict only 1 hp damage, turned as a mummy; SZ L (12' tall); ML 20; XP 975; MM/316.

Fifth Floor

26. Von Kharkov's Room. Even before the PCs enter this room, they are assailed by an unbearable stench. Each PC who fails a saving throw vs. poison retches uncontrollably for two turns and cuts Strength in half for one hour.

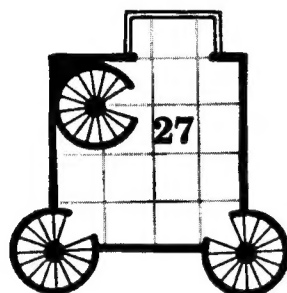
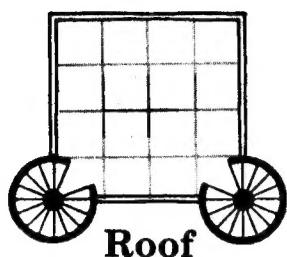
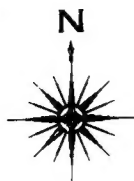
A locked gate of iron bars blocks entry to this room from the stairwell. The PCs

may get in by picking the lock or bending the bars, which are coated with a contact poison that causes paralysis for 12 hours (save vs. poison to avoid paralysis). A PC who examines the gate closely has a 90% chance to notice the oily substance that coats every surface.

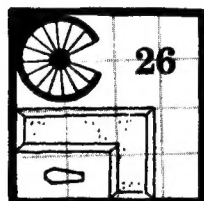
This room's only furniture is a polished mahogany coffin in the southwest corner. Access to the coffin is blocked by a moatlike pit, 10' wide and 10' deep, filled with caltrops and poisonous snakes. Leaping the pit requires a running start and a successful Dexterity

Castle Pantara Levels 5-6

1 square = 10'



Sixth Floor



Fifth Floor

check at -2. In addition to 1-6 hp falling damage, a clumsy PC will land on 0-5 caltrops, suffering 1-4 hp additional damage per caltrop, and must make a save vs. paralyzation to avoid being lamed. (See the *Complete Thief's Handbook*, page 99.) A lamed PC can move at only one-third normal Movement Rate for 24 hours or until magically healed. To add injury to insult, 5-10 angry poisonous snakes attack the PC on the first round and 5-10 more attack each subsequent round, up to a limit of 40.

Poisonous snakes (40): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 11

each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (save vs. poison or take 3-12 hp damage in 1-6 rounds); SZ S; ML 8; XP 175 each; MM/320.

See the sidebar "Where Are the Vampires?" to whether von Kharkov is resting here in his coffin. Even if it is daylight outside and he is asleep, the baron will be instantly aware of trespassers in his room and will mentally call for assistance from his nosferatu slaves, the werepanthers from the blockhouse, and even the town levies. PCs who open von Kharkov's coffin find themselves staring into his wide-open eyes as he tries to *charm* one of them. If the *cat of Felkovic* is with the PCs in its living form, it roars out a challenge and attempts to tear the baron to pieces. Von Kharkov will use the power of his *charm* over a PC to suggest the adventurer stop the big cat from killing him.

If the *cat* has been destroyed (or the PCs never found it), they can destroy the baron by impaling him with a bone stake. (One of Lady Adeline's bone arrows or the giant skeleton's spear will do nicely.) The PCs must then remove his head and fill his mouth with holy wafers. The traditional wooden stake will only break, leaving the baron smiling widely to expose his fangs. Both horror and fear checks are appropriate, especially if the players moan and groan loudly at this development.

Sixth Floor

27. Bride's Room. The stairwell to this room ends in a cage-like door similar to the one in area 25, and is coated with the same poison. If the PCs rescued Maria from "The Lottery," this room is unoccupied and the text pertaining to the bride may be omitted.

A beautiful, pale young woman dressed in a flimsy nightgown lies atop a luxurious fur-laden bed. She appears to be sleeping soundly. Her hands are manacled together and connected to a long chain fastened to a ring set in the center of the floor. On the walls, paintings show male and female panthers hunting together, sleeping contentedly in the branches of a tree, and raising their cubs.

The young woman is **Maria Casalsa** (see "The Lottery" for her statistics), the baron's chosen bride, and she is hopelessly *charmed*. She sincerely be-

lieves that she and the baron are madly in love. He visits her at night and enjoys an evening of marital bliss by slowly draining her of several Constitution points. When she is close to death, von Kharkov allows her to recover for a day or two and then resumes his visits. Eventually, he won't be able to control himself and will drain her totally.

Maria does not want to be rescued and screams loudly for help if she gets the idea that the PCs are foes of her paramour. In the evening this attracts von Kharkov himself, but he will promptly flee to gather reinforcements once he sees the *cat*. If it is daylight, Lady Adeline will come to investigate the problem. The elf vampire assumes her giant eagle form to fly to the room's outside porch, resuming her normal form to engage the PCs in mortal combat.

The PCs may try to reason with Maria by pointing out the obvious, that she is imprisoned with chains, but the bride smiles sweetly and explains that the baron has chained her up out of love, to prevent her from accidentally falling to her death from the porch outside her room. (Actually, the baron does not want her to jump.) The chain is secure enough to hold the weakened bride but may be broken by a successful bend bars roll with a 10% bonus. It is long enough (30') for all PCs to combine their Strength scores in an attempt to break it.

The furs on the bed are of high quality and variety (fox, marten, badger, and mink) and are worth a total of 1,250 gp. A chest of drawers holds 10 sets of silk sheets and pillowcases, all of fine quality. They are worth 55 gp total.

Dungeon Level

28. Stairwell Bottom. The stairs from area 5 descend 25' to this level. The floor here is grimy stone. After Felkovic's demise in the courtyard, the small cat figurine was swatted by some panther cubs into area 5; it tumbled down the stairwell and wound up here, where von Kharkov eventually found it.

29. Cell Block. When the PCs open the door to this area, they are struck by the combined odors of human waste, body odor, and death. Failure to save vs. poison results in each PC retching for one turn and suffering a -1 penalty to all rolls while in this area and for two turns after leaving it.

The long hallway contains nine identi-

cal iron doors. Each door has a small barred window at eye level and an open slot near the floor through which the prisoner inside was fed. Each cell has an iron bed, straw ticking, and a chamber pot.

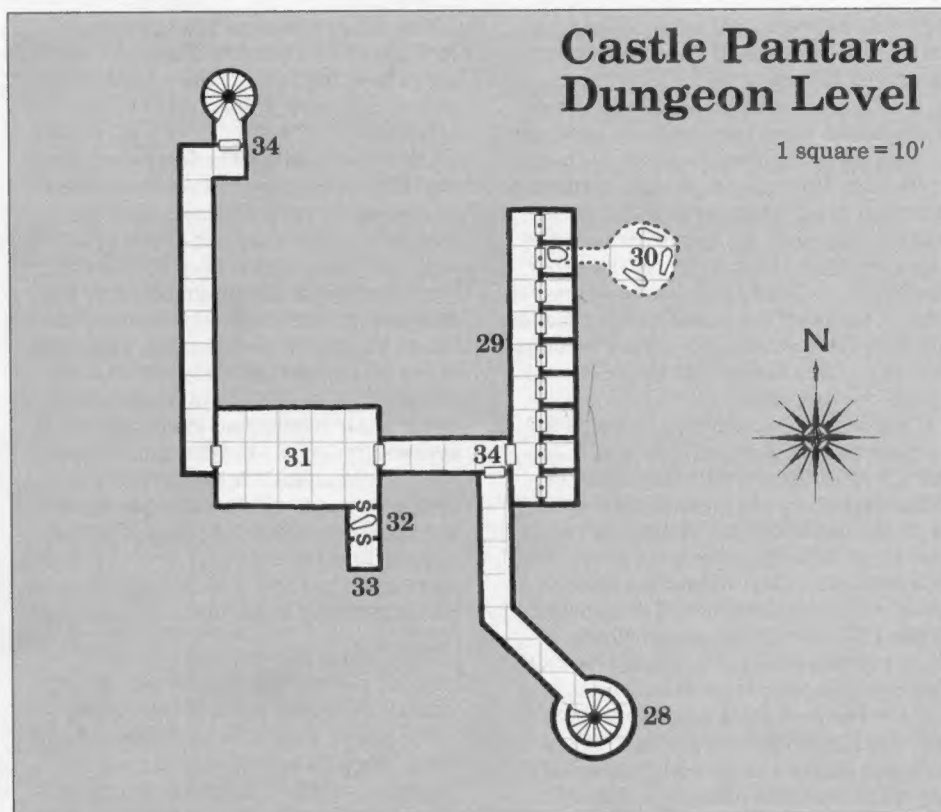
If the PCs killed any werepanthers in Habelnik, the baron will have taken a like number of levies from the manor house, bitten them to cause lycanthropy, and imprisoned them here. On the next new moon, they will become werepanthers and be released to serve the baron. The cell leading to area 30 is always empty; under the bunk, a secret panel gives access to a crawlspace.

30. Secret Coffins. The crawlspace below the cell is 3' in diameter. Five feet beyond the east cell wall it drops 15' straight down (1-6 hp damage if a PC falls) to a pit containing three spare coffins. If the PCs have been detected prowling in the castle, both Korby and Brother Homer rest here during the day and von Kharkov may rest here as well. (See "Where Are the Vampires?" sidebar and area 26.) Nosferatu caught resting down here are essentially helpless except for their *charm* abilities and von Kharkov's ability to summon all werepanthers and levies to his aid.

31. Torture Chamber. Von Kharkov's early reputation for extraordinary cruelty has not diminished, as evidenced by this grisly chamber. The room is stocked with every possible instrument of torture, and the floor is stained with blood. Each device has some catlike feature in its design. For example, the interrogation chair (a chair with spikes on the seat, back, arm rests, and leg rests) is shaped like a large black cat. The thumbscrew is fashioned like a black cat's head. The head crusher appears to be a gigantic black paw. Braziers for the branding irons have cat-leg tripods.

32. Secret Coffin Room. If the PCs are detected in the castle, there is a 75% chance that von Kharkov rests in this coffin during the day. (See "Where Are the Vampires?" sidebar.) For the baron's reaction to intruders, see area 26.

33. Treasure Room. Von Kharkov keeps his magnificent treasure hoard in this chamber. Several chests contain coins in the amount of 3,000 pantherheads, 5,000 cateyes, and 10,000 claws. There are also 10 pieces of jew-



elry (values 1,000 gp ($\times 5$), 800 gp ($\times 4$), 650 gp), and 14 gems (values 3,000 gp, 1,500 gp ($\times 4$), 300 ($\times 9$)).

One of the gems is a perfectly round tigereye, a special type of *ioun stone*. When thrown into the air, the tigereye spins about and *polymorphs* its owner into a tiger for up to three hours. The stone functions once a week. If the stone is used again before seven days have passed, it crumbles into dust and its owner is permanently *polymorphed* into tiger form.

The chests also contain three potions (of *healing*, *gaseous form*, and *treasure finding*), a *shield +1*, a *spear +1*, a *ring of free action*, and a *wand of fire* (20 charges). At the bottom of one chest, the PCs can find a special *bag of cats*. This item works like a *bag of tricks* (see the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*), but the animal grabbed is always some type of cat (roll 1d12):

1. domestic cat
2. bobcat
3. ocelot
4. leopard
5. werepanther in panther form
6. jaguar
7. ocelot

8. cheetah
9. giant lynx
10. tiger
11. weretiger in tiger form
12. spotted lion

A werepanther or weretiger will immediately run off to wreak havoc in the closest civilized area. All other cats pulled from the bag will aid their summoner for three turns. A total of nine cats can be pulled from the bag.

34. Alarm Doors. Fixed on the hall side of this door are strips of leather with hundreds of bells. Unless the door is silenced before it is opened, a loud jangling noise echoes down the hallway. Any of the nosferatu resting on this level are immediately alerted. If von Kharkov hears the bells, he mentally commands the werepanthers and the town levies to come to his aid. They arrive in 10 rounds. Lady Adeline will not respond to the alarm because she takes damage every round she is underground.

Defeating the Baron

Sooner or later, the PCs should catch up with Baron von Kharkov. Where and

how this happens will vary depending on the PCs' actions. If the adventurers catch von Kharkov while he is resting in a coffin, see area 25 for his reactions. If the baron spots the *cat of Felkovic* and can get away, he flees howling for help, preferably through areas with monsters that will delay PCs' pursuit. He immediately summons all werepanthers, the panthers from the courtyard, the other nosferatu, and the town levies to protect him. If he has time, von Kharkov makes his way down to area 33, where he dons his *ring of free action* and grabs the *shield +1* and *spear +1*.

If the battle is inconclusive but the baron wounded several PCs, von Kharkov's fear of the *cat* will make him cautious, expecting his lycanthropic touch to do his work for him. Although the new moon is only seven days away, the PCs will not expect to become were-creatures from the touch of a vampire. When they sprout fangs and claws, their companions will certainly be motivated to complete the adventure!

If the baron did not wound the PCs, he will use his forces to track down the PCs and attack relentlessly, using all his spells and other abilities. He will throw his forces into desperate attacks against the *cat* in a desperate fight with no thought of surrender. Once the *cat* attacks the baron, von Kharkov uses the *long sword +1, +2 vs. enchanted creatures* that he keeps by his side. When he reaches 10 hp or less, he lets out a horrible scream and fights with an additional +1 to hit due to his frenzied fear that he cannot escape through gaseous form. The DM should strive to make the baron's end climactic.

Baron Urik von Kharkov (nosferatu vampire): INT genius; AL LE; AC 1 (-1 with *shield +1*); MV 12; HD 10+2; hp 50; THAC0 11 (8); #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1-3/1-3 or by weapon type +6 (Strength bonus 18/00); SA lycanthropy, Constitution drain, shapechange to panther form or gaseous form at will, *charms* with -3 penalty to victim, gaze attack works as *forget* spell for three prior rounds, summon 1d4 +1 panthers to serve him, summon any prior victims to do his bidding anywhere within Valachan; SD +2 or better weapon to hit, regenerates 3 hp per turn (except damage from the *cat of Felkovic*), immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* spells, immune to poison and paralysis, half damage from cold- and electricity-based spells; MR 10%; SZ M; ML 16; RR1.

Von Kharkov's panther form: AC 6; MV 18; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA rear claws for 1d6 + 1/1d6 + 1; SD surprised only on a 1, leap up to 30' in the air; RR1.

Once von Kharkov is destroyed, several things happen. All werepanthers immediately revert to zero-level humans wherever they are (were-PCs assume their normal levels), and the lycanthropy that is progressing in any dungeon prisoners stops (see area 29). When the baron is destroyed, the curse of his bite is immediately eliminated. Town levies in the castle likewise come out of their trance and stop their attacks. Finally, the destruction of a domain lord causes a major rift in the demiplane, and all vampire slaves immediately crumble into dust. The *cat* reverts to statuette form, and Felkovic's spirit emerges again as a semitransparent humanoid. It speaks:

"Well done, my friends. I cannot thank you enough for helping me fulfill my curse against this fiend. The years' weight is now gone. Nadia is avenged! I now give you your greatest wish: The land is yours. Lead the people of Valachan into a new world where darkness is not feared and happiness is not fleeting. Thank you and farewell."

The figure dissipates into the night air and is gone, and the PCs may hear what sounds like a sigh of relief (or was it the wind?).

The Conjunction

As Felkovic's spirit departs, the entire land of Valachan becomes deathly quiet for 10 minutes. There is no noise at all: no wind through the trees, no birds singing or crickets chirping, no yowls of black panthers. The air seems heavy and thick, and clouds gather along the horizon. Suddenly, the land is rocked by tremors, and violent thunderstorms rush in with heavy rain and lighting. Even through the thick clouds, the PCs see streaks of light in the sky, multi-colored meteors flying in all directions. This chaos goes on for three hours and no one can rest. If the PCs look down from the castle, they see forest animals running wildly about. The town levies and former Black Leopards roll on the ground, moaning and groaning with their eyes rolled back. If the PCs are watching, they also see the remains of

von Kharkov fade and disappear.

This conjunction is a rare event, in which a domain of Ravenloft replaces a portion of land in another realm. (See the RAVENLOFT boxed set, *Realm of Terror* book). When it is all over, Valachan (along with the PCs) is wherever the DM wants to put it. The DM can use this device to return the PCs to their own world, or place them somewhere else.

Concluding the Adventure

Eventually the towns of Valachan send emissaries to Castle Pantara to find out what happened. They hail the PCs as heroes and acknowledge them as the leaders of Valachan. Leadership will certainly be needed if the land has been transplanted to an area with distrustful neighbors who may not appreciate several thousand strangers appearing out of nowhere.

Follow-up adventures may be necessary to clean up the various evils left over in Valachan. Ghosts wander the wilderness, the maddened spirits of the rebels who were killed painfully by von Kharkov and the werepanthers. Several RAVENLOFT sourcebooks mention other evil beings that live in this land.

Like all good villains, Von Kharkov himself might return once the PCs have relaxed in their new realm. What happened to his remains? Is he lurking about in some dormant form, only to reappear later? If he seeks vengeance, what form will it take?

And what of the *cat of Felkovic*? After the wizard's spirit leaves the figurine, much of its magic is gone, but it still functions like a *figurine of wondrous power*. When the command word is spoken, it becomes a *jade battlecat* (with AC 4 and all the statistics of a smilodon). It will serve once a day for up to three hours, and it must be fed (preferably pork, well done).

Paul Culotta and his family recently moved to Tacoma, Washington.

"Felkovic's Cat" was one of Paul's first submissions to DUNGEON® Adventures, and has had about as many lives as its namesake. Paul would like to dedicate this adventure to his wife, Shari.

Ω

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Hilly/forested
FREQUENCY: Uncommon
ORGANIZATION: Pride
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE: Very
TREASURE: Nil
ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING: Varies by location
ARMOR CLASS: 2 (4)
MOVEMENT: 12 (15)
HIT DICE: 5 +1
THACO: 15
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 (3)
DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type (1-3/1-3/1-6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Shapeshift (rear claws 2-7/2-7)
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Silver or magical weapon to hit; (surprised only on a 1)
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: M (5'-6½' tall in human form, or large predatory cat)
MORALE: 14; 20 defending von Kharkov
XP VALUE: 975

Werepanthers are unique to Valachan. They are the elite guards and enforcers of Baron Urik von Kharkov, the nosferatu vampire lord of that domain. The statistics in parentheses represent creature's panther form.

While many vampires have human henchmen to guard their resting places, von Kharkov has created these monsters to do his bidding. The baron, unlike other nosferatu vampires, was once a panther and can assume panther form. When so transformed, his panther bite infects the victim with an unusual lycanthropy. On the next new moon, the victim goes through horrible convulsions as the disease takes its full course. His face and body change so much that former associates do not recognize him, and his skin darkens to an umber hue. Furthermore, he grows stronger and more agile (S 17, D 16, unless scores are already better than this). After three hours of convulsions, the process is complete. The victim can now shapechange into panther form at will, his alignment has changed to lawful evil, and he is permanently *charmed* by the baron. Only silver or magical weapons can harm a werepanther.

The werepanthers are easy to pick out from the rest of the population. There are other dark skinned people in Valachan, but the werepanthers are the only ones who wear banded armor and carry cruel, unique weapons of war. Each carries a heavy black mace with the blunt end fashioned like a panther's paw; this weapon is referred to fearfully by the Valachanese as "the baron's arm." It is a *mace* +1 and does 3-10 hp damage (including the werepanther's +1 Strength bonus). The other two weapons are a long, thick, black-bladed knife (Dmg 1-5/2-7) and a short whip of black leather strips tipped with sharp, cruel pieces of metal. When the whip hits a victim in the face (on a natural 20), it has a 70% chance of leaving a permanent scar (-1 to Charisma) and a 10% chance of blinding one eye. Werepanthers are also proficient with heavy crossbows but are rarely seen walking around with them. In melee combat, they use the mace in one hand and the knife in the other. The whip is used to discipline the populace.



Seven werepanthers are stationed in Rotwald and the same number in Habelnik. Fifteen werepanthers reside in the blockhouse at the base of Castle Pantara. Those stationed in the towns are grimly ominous sheriffs who roam the streets maintaining the baron's will. Those at Castle Pantara keep an eye on the premises, capture escaping townspeople, and go among the towns enforcing monthly levies and the baron's annual bridal lottery. If there is an outbreak of trouble, they reinforce the werepanthers assigned to each town.

The townspeople are not allowed to possess weapons other than a dagger or club, so the Black Leopards (as they are fearfully referred to by the populace) are practically invincible. When the last uprising occurred many years ago, the rebels were quickly overcome by the werepanthers and taken to the woods, where they suffered a lingering, painful end. To this day, people still whisper about what really happened to those who rebelled, and mothers discipline unruly children by threatening to turn them over to a Black Leopard.

The Black Leopards maintain a quiet, stern visage when patrolling the streets of the towns or operating outside Castle Pantara. They exude an aura of unapproachability that is not magical but a result of their body language. Everyone gives them a wide berth.

The werepanthers' Achilles' heel is the powerful nosferatu lord who created them. If von Kharkov should ever be destroyed, the werepanthers in Valachan will suddenly collapse and go into convulsions as the mystical bond to their creator is severed. When the convulsions end, they revert to being the persons they were before, but they suffer nightmares and flashbacks to their werepanther days for several years.